LONG LIVE VINYL

Designing Revolver
Inside the Beatles classic with Klaus Voormann

BANNED
THE 40 MOST CONTROVERSIAL SLEEVES IN MUSIC HISTORY...

Essential
ROLLING STONES
40 must-buy records from six decades

Buy your next turntable
The complete guide

Classic Album
Massive Attack's *Blue Lines*

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Public Service Broadcasting
End Of The Road Festival
Saint Etienne

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THE new MAGAZINE FOR VINYL LOVERS

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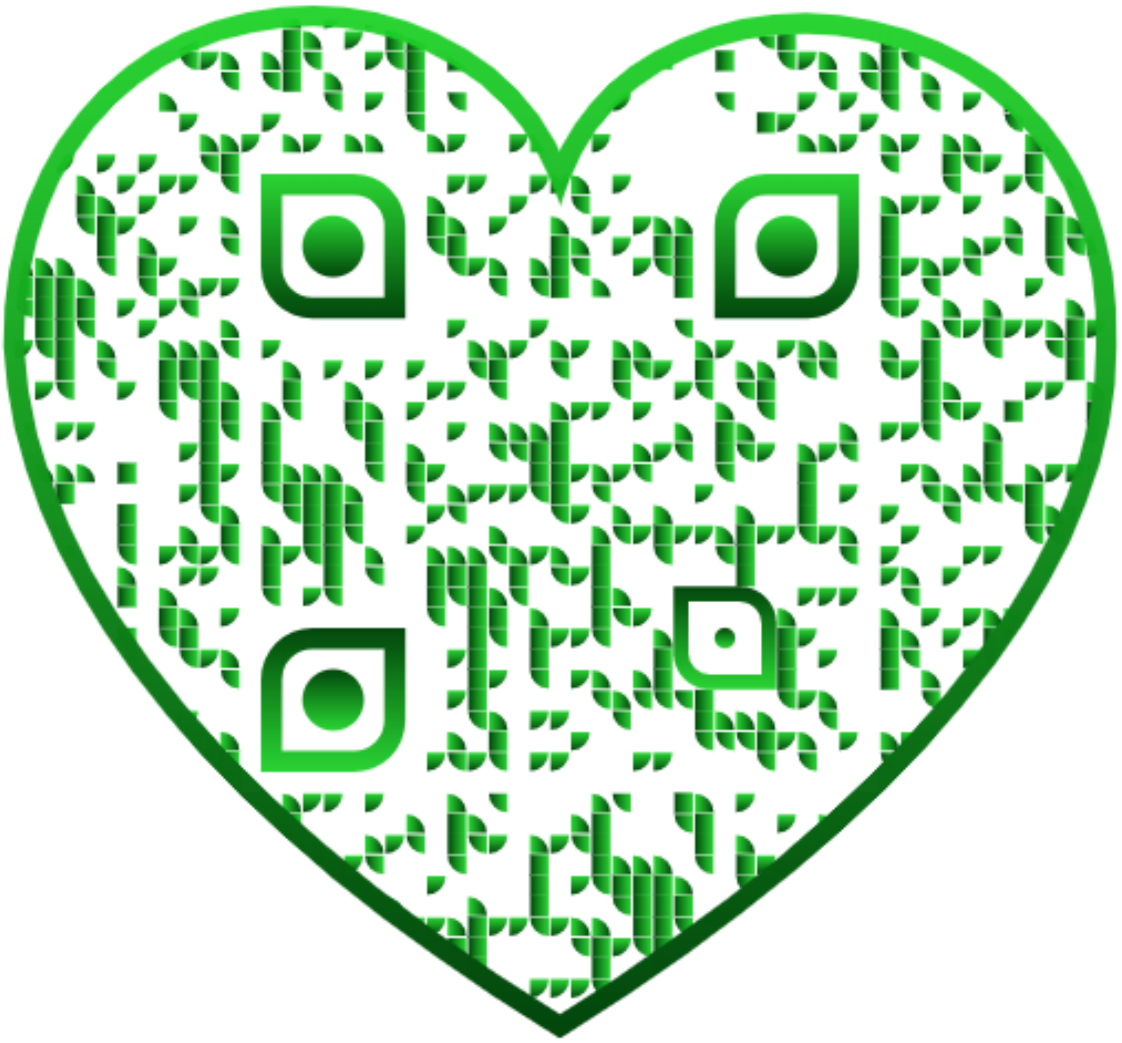

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Welcome...

Residing as we are in the midst of the digital age, with all of the ephemeral, throwaway cultural phenomena that entails, the physical nature of the album sleeve continues to hold a powerful allure. One browse of Instagram will throw up thousands of accounts dedicated wholly to appreciation of the tactile wonder of records – a format that, fortunately for those addicted to the social-media platform, is entirley square (in dimensions, not status). Sure, digital files can offer us lossless playback in immaculate high fidelity, but what of all the tangible memories that lie in those sleeves and the countless times we've removed the records from their safe confines and put the needle in the groove?

Our feature collates controversial covers which aroused the interest of the censors and ended up being banned

Klaus Voormann, the man who designed The Beatles' iconic *Revolver* cover, was at the peak of his powers at a time when all design was strictly analogue – he worked with pens, paints, brushes and scissors. We speak to Klaus in this month's Cover Star feature, as he talks us through the monumental day he sat down to a private audience with the Fab Four to listen to that life-changing record for the first time.

Album sleeves, of course, also have the power to provoke strong emotional reactions, and our cover feature collates 40 of the most controversial covers in music history. Sleeves which, for a multitude of reasons, aroused the interest of the censors and ended up being banned. We bring you the inside stories on why they caused outrage and were removed from record shelves.

Elsewhere this issue, the band we focus on in our Essential feature, The Rolling Stones, had a few memorable covers of their own – not least *Let It Bleed*, with its cake baked by Delia Smith, and the *Sticky Fingers* sleeve featuring tightly packed jeans which, contrary to popular belief, didn't belong to Mick Jagger – the man Keith Richards affectionately pokes fun at in his autobiography for having a 'tiny todger'.

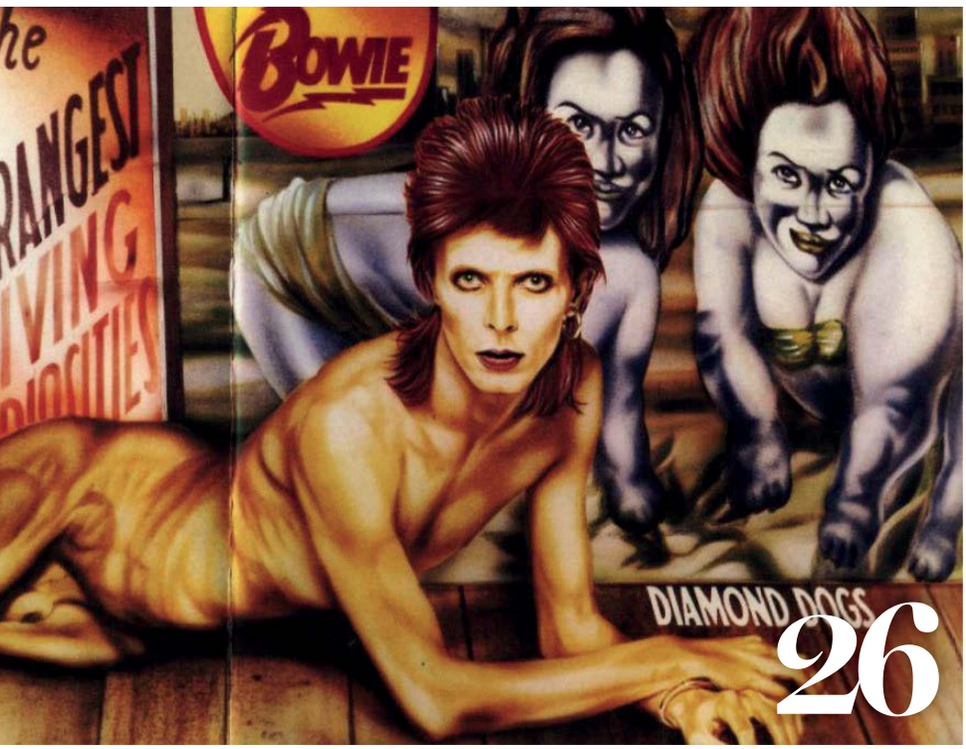
We also salute arguably the best album ever to come out of *Long Live Vinyl*'s native West Country, Massive Attack's *Blue Lines*, an LP epitomising the eclectic, laconic, genre-melding cool early-90s Bristol exuded – and continues to today. Plus, in our expanded hardware section, veteran hi-fi journalist Paul Rigby brings you a definitive guide to buying a new turntable – whatever your budget. Whether you've dusted off the old record collection and are looking to re-enter the turntable world or you're upgrading your existing setup, it's essential reading.

Gary Walker *Editor*

LONGLIVEVINYL

68

60



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LONG LIVE VINYL

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LONG LIVE VINYL

The *Long Live Vinyl* team pick their favourite banned sleeves...

Gary Walker
The Jimi Hendrix Experience
Axis: Bold As Love

Jenny Cook
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Appetite For Destruction

Alison Zak-Collins
Prince
Lovesexy

Andy Cottle
The Rolling Stones
Beggars Banquet

Ian Peel
FGTH *Welcome To The Pleasuredome*

Meet our expert contributors...

Simon Raymonde
Simon was the bassist and keyboard player in the Cocteau Twins and founded the band Snowbird. He launched the independent label Bella Union in 1997. His label has been a home to bands including Fleet Foxes, The Flaming Lips, Midlake, Father John Misty, John Grant, Explosions In The Sky and Lanterns On The Lake. He's also produced many great albums.

Paul Rigby
Paul has been a journalist and editor for more than 30 years and has penned his scribbles for hundreds of magazines and newspapers in the UK, Europe and the USA. He writes for UK national newspapers, *Hi-Fi World* and *Record Collector*. As The Audiophile Man, he is also resident in the shady confines of his own music and hi-fi website at theaudiophileman.com.

Randy Fox
Randy grew up in Muhlenberg County, Kentucky and now lives in Nashville. He's written for *Vintage Rock*, *Country Music*, *MIX Magazine*, *Nashville Scene*, *East Nashvillian*, *Journal Of Country Music*, *Goldmine* and many others. He's a co-founder of independent Nashville radio station WXNA (wxnafm.org) and co-hosts the programme, *Hipbilly Jamboree*.

Laura K Williams
Laura started her journalism career covering news and features for regional and national newspapers and magazines. She went on to edit *247 Magazine* and has contributed to a wide range of music publications, including *Clash*, *Classic Pop* and *Louder Than War*. As the founder of Figure 8 Festival, she helped raise thousands of pounds for charity.

Chris Parkin
After stapling together fanzines as a teenager, Chris won promotion to the world of proper music journalism and a job at *Time Out London* in the early 2000s. He's since written for the *Guardian*, *BBC*, *NME*, *RBMA*, *Glastonbury Free Press* and others. He continues to cherish the memory of Mick Hucknall and Ray Davies hanging up on him in a strop during an interview.

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On the record

"There's something different about the feel of *Road Songs For Lovers*. Strangely for me, there's a lot of record company enthusiasm!" *Chris Rea*

REA'S ROAD SONGS

Rea is back on record, with new album *Road Songs For Lovers* – inspired by the discovery of a bag of old demos

"This album could have been titled *Found In A Bottom Drawer*," Chris Rea tells *Long Live Vinyl* in an exclusive chat about his new LP. "I was having a pretty dismal time in 2016 and my old manager and 'big brother' came to see me and came across some dodgy demos in a bag of mess. He had an idea, which is par for the course with him, and reckoned that getting into something would get me going again, so I went with it."

The resulting album – *Road Songs For Lovers* – will be released in September. "There's something different about the feel of it," Chris tells us. "It's very under-produced and, strangely for me, a lot of record company enthusiasm! It's funny how you can pull your hair out, working on something, and then find some demos and some people love it."

We couldn't resist the chance of asking this blues, rock – and, of course, Balearic – legend about the vinyl revival. "I always loved vinyl," Chris opines. "I subconsciously loved the vibe that it was a 'oneness': like a painting, you couldn't dissect it, especially Motown, Spector and psychedelic stuff. When I was a kid, I used to imagine somebody slowly taking the microphone out of the studio (as I listened to the end of a song) – now known as a fade out!"

"My prize possession is a mono vinyl copy of Miles Davis' *Kind Of Blue*. It was given to me at the stage door of Manchester Apollo by a lady who had heard how much I adored Davis during a radio interview. It was her husband's copy and he had passed away. I often think of her, and him, when I put it on. You don't get that kind of thing with an iTunes download."

HMV'S WEEK

HMV's Vinyl Week promotion brought forth some unique editions available only in their stores. Iggy Pop fans were serviced best, with a special pressing of *The Idiot* on silver vinyl and *Lust For Life* on red. Both were limited to 1,500 copies. 2,000 copies of Suede's *Suede* were pressed on gold vinyl for the store, and there was a 1,000 edition of The Creation's *Our Music Is Red With Purple Flashes* on red and purple vinyl. The biggest run was 4,000 copies for Ed Sheeran's + which, though only on black vinyl, did come in an exclusive sleeve.

Trane Tracks

John Coltrane, Don Cherry, Lee Morgan and Stan Getz star in a major series of jazz reissues – including some special 10" editions – released this month. Atlantic Records' 2016 CD box, *The Atlantic Years In Mono* is the source for many of the releases, the first four of which are in mono: John Coltrane's *Trane: The Atlantic Collection*, *Giant Steps* and *Olé Coltrane*, and Coltrane and Don Cherry's *The Avant-Garde*. There are stereo re-presses planned, too, for *Coltrane Plays The Blues*, Milt Jackson & Coltrane's *Bags & Trane* and Lee Morgan's 1960 Roulette Records release *The Roulette Sides*. All are released on 180g black 12" vinyl, except for the Lee Morgan release, which comes on a 33rpm 10" disc. Although no release date is set as yet, we also hear another 33rpm 10" – of Stan Getz's *Split Kick* – is being readied for release very soon.

On the record

EN VOGUE'S LOVIN'
With 20 million albums sales to date, plus seven MTV Video Music Awards and seven Grammy nominations – and a No. 12 placing in our sister publication, *Classic Pop*'s recent Top 40 Girl Groups special – En Vogue are a defining voice of 90s RnB. Their most influential album, 1992's *Funky Divas*, gets a remastered vinyl reissue this month. Celebrating its 25th anniversary, it features the UK No. 4 hit (and US R&B chart No. 1) *My Lovin' (You're Never Gonna Get It)*.

DAF PUNKS

THIS IS... DAS IST DAF

Fans of Kraftwerk, Propaganda, Laibach et al may know the name DAF, but possibly not too much of their music. Short for Deutsch Amerikanische Freundschaft, the duo started off in the late 70s and, after a decade, declared they'd achieved everything they'd set out to do, and vanished for good. Groenland Records has now come up with the multi-format vinyl boxset, *DAS IST DAF*. The core LPs are their first four, released between 1980 and 1982, namely *Die Kleinen Und Die Bösen*, *Alles Ist Gut*, *Gold Und Liebe* and *Für Immer*. There's a six-track 12" compilation of remixes, a 7" containing two previously unreleased tracks, a booklet, poster, an 'original autograph card' and a DAF slipmat.

Quote of the month

HOTEL CARL-IFORNIA

Carl Barât on The Libertines' plans to open a hotel and recording studio as they commence work on their next album: "We want somewhere where we can have a home. We can record there, drink there, have a bar there, be creative and have other people there as well. A bit like Warhol's Factory, but not so much. By the sea… We can write in there, record in there, rehearse in there, we'll be together – that will be nice."

PET SHOP BOYS AHOY

After much online teasing and a few false starts, Pet Shop Boys are finally set to re-press all of their albums on vinyl. Their Further Listening project started off in 2001 with Deluxe two-CD editions of their first six albums. And now, 16 years later, albums seven, eight and nine – that's 1999's *Nightlife*, 2002's *Release* and 2006's *Fundamental* – all finally get the Further Listening treatment, too. And Parlophone have confirmed to us they'll begin reissuing each of the duo's albums on 180g vinyl. *Nightlife*, *Release* and *Fundamental* are set for a 28 July release, while remastered editions of all their other albums will, we're told, "continue over the next year". So look out for those 180g editions of the rest of the catalogue.

SALAD DREAM

90S STARS SALAD ARE BACK WITH A NEW ALBUM, AND 16-TRACK SET OF EARLY DEMOS

Britpop stalwarts Salad are back. Remembered fondly for *Dream A Little Dream Of Me*, a collaboration with Terry Hall, for 1995's War Child LP, *The Help Album*, founder members Paul Kennedy and Marijne van der Vlugt have reconvened as Salad Undressed and put together a special red-vinyl release of early demos. They're compiling a 16-track set, *Aeroplane Sadness (Demos 1987-90)*, of their early demos as The Merry Babes, which will be released later this summer. Marijne tells *Long Live Vinyl*: "These demos are a window into the chemistry we've always had as a songwriting partnership, and I'm delighted to have rekindled that fire with our Salad Undressed album *Good Love Bad Love*, which will be out on vinyl at the end of the year. The renewed interest in vinyl is a dream come true, even if I did get rid of all mine when moving to suburbia in 2009… oops!"

"Back then, making a record was something I'd wanted to do since I learned to walk and talk and was listening to my mum and dad's copy of *A Hard Day's Night*," Paul adds. "And, as far as The Merry Babes' demos go, we're still very fond of them. Some of them are quite out there, and ahead of their time, we like to think." Now their time has come, on vinyl.

THE VINYL FESTIVAL
23-24 SEPTEMBER 2017
PRINTWORKS LONDON

Get your Vinyl Festival tickets now

Time is running out for *Long Live Vinyl* readers to snap up special **Early Bird tickets** to **The Vinyl Festival** – our weekend-long celebration at London's Printworks on 23 to 24 September. Our Early Bird prices are on offer only until 30 July – go to www.thevinylfestival.com now and you'll save 25%…

The Vinyl Festival is a unique live event that encapsulates all of the best elements of *Long Live Vinyl* magazine, over two days in the stunning post-industrial venue Printworks, London (www.printworkslondon.co.uk). The event is shaping up to become a cornerstone of the calendar for all vinyl aficionados and avid record collectors, perfectly complementing April's Record Store Day. A two-dayer in central London, there will be A-list DJs (spinning vinyl only, of course!), live Q&As, a huge record fair, vinyl valuations (so bring your own rarities) and much more. Early Bird ticket prices start from just £16, with day, weekend and VIP packages available.

PACKED LINE-UP

"The arrival of The Vinyl Festival is, for me, a dream come true," enthuses Festival founder Ian Peel. "The Vinyl Festival is about way more than crate-digging, pop-up record shops and indie-label stalls, although those will definitely be a major part of the fun. It's about getting hands-on with the latest turntables and hi-fi. It's also about serious sleeve-art exhibitions. But – most of all – it's about the two key elements that make any music festival great: the artist line-up and the social side."

THE HEADLINERS

The first set of headliners to be announced – for both live Q&As and DJ sets – perfectly sum up the spirit of the event. DJ, frontman and TV personality Huey Morgan, indie label and new-band champion Steve Lamacq, Charlatans founder (and author of *Tim Book Two: Vinyl Adventures From Istanbul To San Francisco*) Tim Burgess, and soundtrack specialist and on-air vinyl advocate Edith Bowman. Record-lovers, all – with more appearances and interviews in our Vinyl Forum set to be announced.

Huey Morgan

Steve Lamacq

Edith Bowman

Tim Burgess

On both days of the weekend, Classic Album Sundays will be treating us to carefully curated classic records, all played on seriously high-end audio equipment. The line-up of albums being played will be voted for by you, so keep an eye on the *Long Live Vinyl* and The Vinyl Festival social media pages to have your say…

There will be regular DJ sets over the two days: covering everything from indie and classic rock to house, disco, northern soul and synth-pop. There will also be a dedicated VIP room, with a bar and an opportunity for meet-and-greets – VIP tickets are an opportunity to see the festival in style and also include fast-tracking, a stuffed goodie bag and plenty of other unexpected treats.

The Vinyl Festival will be supporting the charity Music For All. See **www.musicforall.org.uk** for more info.

GET IN TOUCH

This is the first event of its kind, so we'd love to hear from you, the *Long Live Vinyl* readers! We welcome all of your recommendations for what you'd like to see and hear at the festival, so get in touch with us at **@vinylfestuk** on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, or on our website at **www.thevinylfestival.com**

WARPAINT IN PRINT

A deluxe new book reveals life behind the scenes with LA indie band Warpaint, from the perspective of their tour manager

LA four-piece Warpaint have spent more than 10 years disrupting what it means to be punk-rock, art-rock and dream-pop in the 21st century, from their Red Hot Chili Peppers-endorsed debut EP, *Exquisite Corpse*, to their off-shoot collabs with the likes of Kurt Vile and Hot Chip. Now their tour manager and photographer Robin Laananen has put together a deluxe book, *Us / Then* (Setanta Publishing), which tells the group's story so far. Limited to just 2,000 numbered copies (150 of which are signed by the band), it comes with a bonus live Warpaint 7" of two exclusive versions of *Whiteout* and *Bees*.

"One of my main goals of the book is to bring the fans a unique perspective typically unseen," Laananen tells *Long Live Vinyl*, "of a genuine look at life on the road. I felt it was important to include live tracks, to really bring people into a tour, as the show is the reason for everything else. I grew up on records, and I felt it was important to have the songs on vinyl, rather than CD or digital download, as it feels more special."

And why *Bees* and *Whiteout*? "We wanted to include a new song, along with an older song, that is loved by both the fans and the band. When we listened to the recording of the show – it was recorded in Europe in March 2017 – these two stood out."

REBIRTH OF *THE COOL*

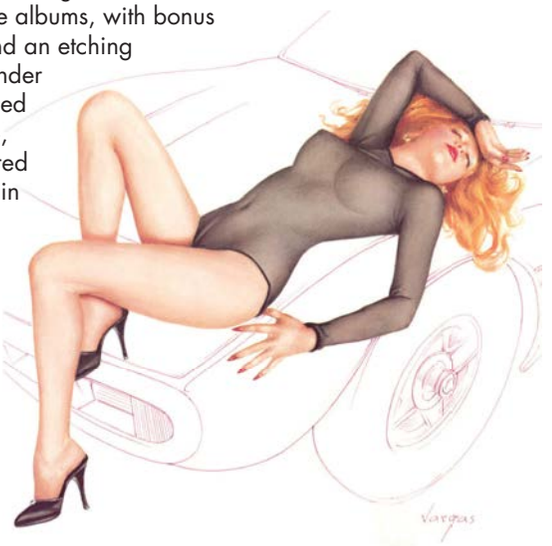
One of the most groundbreaking hip-hop albums of the last 10 years – Lupe Fiasco's *The Cool* – is set for release on double clear vinyl. This 10th Anniversary edition of the 2007 US No. 1 (and UK No. 7) features cameos from Snoop Dogg and UNKLE and, a concept album of sorts, is described by Fiasco as "about a hustler who dies and comes back to life, only to get robbed by two little kids with the same gun that killed him".

VOICE OF THE BEEHIVE

A cross between a work of art and a hi-fi separate, the F1 Speaker is the latest product from German designers Concrete Audio. As the *Contemporist* art blog explains: "Concrete have designed a collection of wall-mounted speakers that are made from concrete, wood, or a custom design, that allows them to look more like art hanging on the wall, rather than a speaker." The F1 is made up of 41 small speakers arranged in a beehive-like array and, with a depth of just over three centimetres and no cables required thanks to a Bluetooth interface, it's eminently wall-hangable.

Vintage Cars

Vinyl is at the centre of The Cars' latest reissues, which take in expanded editions of 1979's *Candy-O* and 1980's *Panorama*. Both will be re-presented in gatefold sleeves and expanded to double albums, with bonus tracks on Side C and an etching on Side D. A contender for this issue's Banned feature on page 26, having been censored with a price sticker in Our Price stores in the UK, *Candy-O* was recorded with Queen producer Roy Thomas Baker and went quadruple-Platinum in the US. The new vinyl edition adds seven bonus tracks – including the unreleased *They Won't See You* (Northern Studios version) – and the gatefold adds a new interview with guitarist Elliot Easton.



The Billboard No. 3-charting *Panorama* from 1980 adds just four bonus tracks, but two of them are hitherto unreleased songs – *Shooting For You* and *Be My Baby* – and the gatefold for the release has keyboardist Greg Hawkes under the interview spotlight.

Twin Peaks' Trouble

Twin Peaks fans take note. David Lynch's son is part of an old-school R&B/jazz trio that's recorded a track for the TV series reboot, which will be released on 7" by Sacred Bones Records. "As seen performing on *Twin Peaks*, the instrumental trio Trouble includes *Twin Peaks*' creator David Lynch's son Riley Lynch on guitar," Sacred Bones' Christopher Hansell tells *Long Live Vinyl*, "plus Dean Hurley (longtime music supervisor for Lynch) on drums and Alex Zhang Hungtai (Dirty Beaches, Last Lizard) on tenor saxophone.

Snake Eyes appears in Episode 5 of the new series of the cult TV classic. "It effectively harkens back to a time when noir R&B was the de facto soundtrack to hard liquor violence," Hansell adds. The single's B-side, *Mother's Gone*, was recorded during the sessions for the series, though not actually featured in the programme – and this looks set to be the one and only release from Trouble on vinyl, or indeed any other format.

Simon says

SIMON RAYMONDE

The Bella Union boss recalls landing his dream job – and how you could never be sure who was coming through the door of an 80s record store

Back in 1980, fresh out of school with only a few weeks' bruising summer work on a building site under my studded belt – and keen to move in with my best friend Stan to a room in a small flat in Earls Court, London – I met Nigel House. He'd not long since opened a superb record shop in Ladbroke Grove, called Rough Trade. It was a brief but significant meeting, and led to me spending most days that year hanging about in his shop with Stan, soaking it all in – and then every night, going to see any and every band we could around London.

At a time when small record shops like this were plentiful, I was fortunate to have also made friends with both the boss of the nearby Beggars Banquet shop and his brother – who ran an indie label upstairs called Situation 2. Steve Kent, who managed the shop, must have soon realised that even though I didn't work there, I was such a massive fan of the punk/post-punk/reggae vinyl scene from me pouring over the back pages of *Melody Maker* and the *NME*, that I probably knew nearly as much as he did.

Thankfully, he asked me to help him out in the store, initially for a day or two and then, fairly soon after, every day. Barely 100 metres from my bedsit, this was my dream job. Not long after starting in the record shop, my post-punk band The Drowning Craze signed a deal with Peter Kent's Situation 2 and, without realising it, my destiny was set right there and then. You see, 4AD *also* shared this little label office above the record shop, and while the size of 4AD now in 2018 is probably that of a small multinational, back in 1980/81 when I walked through the door in my teens, it was just a small team of probably two or three. But it soon became my whole world for the next few years.

The record company office could only be entered by coming through the shop first, so that doorway became almost as central a focal point as the shop counter itself. Ironically, my very first meeting with Cocteau Twins was at that door, and looking back on it now, it was more significant than I could ever have imagined. Having taken the train down from Scotland in early 1982 to visit the label for the first time to drop off a cassette of their first ever recordings, the trio (Elizabeth Fraser, Robin Guthrie and Will Heggie) had got their timings a little off and arrived around 9.30am, before anyone from 4AD had even gotten in, before we had even opened the shop. Seeing them through the window, shuffling around outside, looking curious and a little restless, I opened the door and asked them if I could help. They were lovely, shy and so very softly spoken. I duly took the tapes and promised I would pass them on to Ivo Watts-Russell. Their debut LP came out in September of that year.

I wasn't exactly a virgin, but I felt like one at that moment. I'm sure my face went brighter than her dark-cherry lipstick

The doorway continued to bring in more than just vinyl customers. One of my forever-heroes, Billy Mackenzie of The Associates, was a frequent visitor to the shop/label. Billy would never just wander in, he EXPLODED through the doorway – colourful, excited, engaged, a force of energy and with more charisma in his tiny frame than any one single person I'd ever encountered before. There was a glamour to Billy Mackenzie that belied the punk background of this Dundee boy. Indeed, I've heard stories of him turning up at record labels in a Rolls Royce, which may have been true, but the glamour I saw was inside. He had a beautiful soul, too, and I was never happier than when he asked me to walk his beloved whippets around the block while he had a meeting at the office. And as a side note, *Sulk* by The Associates could well be one of the greatest albums ever made.

In 1982, the door opened one day to the stunning Lydia Lunch, who was working with The Birthday Party and also their guitarist Rowland S Howard on *Some Velvet Morning*. Like Billy, here was someone who really knew how to make an entrance. She stayed in the shop a while, talking to the boss, Steve. All the customers were well aware of who she was and I'm sure she could tell I was a little awestruck. She came up to me as if she was about to ask me something and, out of the blue, kissed me right on the mouth – then said she loved my red hair. While I wasn't exactly a virgin, I truly felt like one at that moment, and I'm sure my face went brighter than her dark-cherry lipstick. I didn't see her again; probably a good thing, as she would no doubt have had me for lunch.

One Friday later in 1982, the door swung open with a distinctly cold wind as co-owner of Beggars Banquet Nick Austin waltzed briskly through on his way upstairs as normal. "Oh and by the way chaps, don't bother opening the shop tomorrow, as today's our last day," he delivered, as casually as if he were asking for no milk in his tea. The abrupt end of an era, it didn't even feel like an affectionate punch. Doors shutting. Within a few months, my first band was over and I was invited to join Cocteau Twins and sign to 4AD.

SIMON RAYMONDE ***was the bassist and keyboard player in Cocteau Twins and founded the independent record label Bella Union***

The Story Behind The Sleeve

#3 Post

Björk

Both the title and the sleeve art for Björk's second post-Sugarcubes album, released in 1995 on One Little Indian, are a love letter to the singer's homeland. While *Debut* was written in Iceland, *Post* refers to her move to England and sense of longing for her family and friends. The name is also a reference to the daily letters Björk sent home, and there are numerous visual props employed by designer Paul White of Me Company. Shot in a London street by fashion photographer and former partner Stéphane Sednaoui, Björk is surrounded by gigantic, brightly coloured postcards and personal belongings, giving the impression of a vivid Japanese street scene. She wears a jacket designed by friend Hussein Chalayan, adorned with Air Mail insignia – suggesting that the singer wants to post herself home to Iceland.

Björk told *Stereogum*: "My musical heart was scattered at the time and I wanted the album to show that." The eclectic and collaborative *Post* was a critical success, reaching No. 2 in the UK album charts and spawning the singles *It's Oh So Quiet*, *Hyperballad* and *Army Of Me*.

NOW SPINNING

The essential 12 tracks on the *Long Live Vinyl* turntable this month – plus, this issue's companion beer, Rocketman from Arbor Ales, a full-flavoured IPA with zesty Mosaic and Citra hops

- ***I Love* – Margo Guryan (*29 Demos*)**
- ***They Gave Me A Lamp* – Public Service Broadcasting (*Every Valley*)**
- ***Creature Comfort* – Arcade Fire (*Everything Now*)**
- ***(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction* – The Rolling Stones**
- ***Safe From Harm* – Massive Attack (*Blue Lines*)**
- ***Sweet Arcadia* – Saint Etienne (*Home Counties*)**
- ***Om Shanti* – Alice Coltrane (*The Ecstatic Music Of Alice Coltrane Turiyasangitananda*)**
- ***Freedom Ring* – Celebration (*Wounded Healer*)**
- ***Holding On* – The War On Drugs (*A Deeper Understanding*)**
- ***Vitamin C* – Can (*The Singles*)**
- ***Moonshine Freeze* – This Is The Kit (*Moonshine Freeze*)**
- ***In My World* – Buckingham McVie (*Lindsey Buckingham/Christine McVie*)**

Stax Appeal

Rhino Entertainment and Concord Music Group have teamed up to celebrate the 60th anniversary of one of soul and R&B's most influential labels. Their "year-long salute" will take in the works of Otis Redding, Sam & Dave and Booker T. & The M.G.'s (now owned by Rhino) and The Dramatics, Isaac Hayes and The Staple Singers (under the tutelage of Concord). The most attractive vinyl release planned is Otis Redding and Carla Thomas' *King & Queen*, pressed on gold-coloured vinyl. This is joined by 180g black editions of *Green Onions* by Booker T. & The M.G.'s., *Walking The Dog* by Rufus Thomas and *Soul Men* by Sam & Dave.

Stax's 'Philosopher Of Soul', Johnnie Taylor, is also seeing a vinyl release as part of Rhino and Concord's joint Stax 60 celebrations

A further six vinyl reissues are set for release on 7 July, including two titles by Otis Redding (*The Soul Album* and *The Great Otis Redding Sings Soul*) and platters from Sam & Dave (*Double Dynamite*), Carla Thomas (*Carla*), Booker T. & The M.G.'s (*Hip Hug-Her*) and Albert King (*Born Under A Bad Sign*).

To get everyone in the mood, the Stax team have put together a taster playlist on their official Spotify profile at spoti.fi/2rZOsQU.

© Bill Carrier courtesy of Stax Archives

long live vinyl

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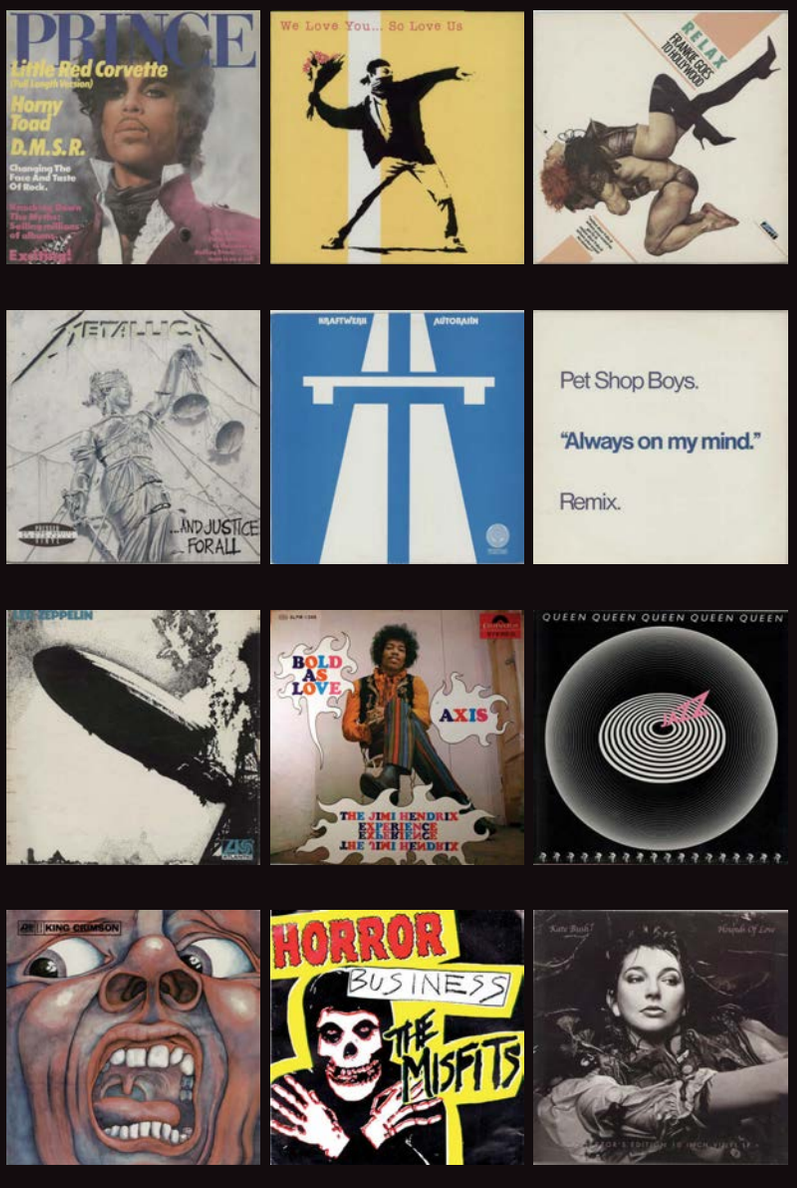

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On The Radar

NICK HAKIM

A recurring dream ushers forth a melting pot of musical styles on a distinctive debut

Raised in Washington DC by South American parents and citing influences as eclectic as salsa, Neuva Canción, merengue, and Afro-Peruvian and Cuban music, Robert Wyatt, Marvin Gaye, Portishead and My Bloody Valentine, Nick Hakim's debut album was always going to be a diverse affair.

Following on from the *Where Will We Go Pt 1.* and *2.* EPs that pricked our ears to Hakim's considerable imaginative talents, *Green Twins* was recorded in studios in New York, Philadelphia and London after he moved to NYC from Boston, and was released by ATO Records in May. Its hazy, slow-burning compositions and inventive production are multi-layered treasures: Hakim's soulful voice is juxtaposed with electronic beats, and the whole thing is honed expertly with the assistance of engineer Andrew Sarlo. "We wanted to imagine what it would have sounded like if RZA had produced a Portishead album," Hakim, who studied at Berklee College of Music, tells *Long Live Vinyl.* "We experimented with engineering techniques from Phil Spector and Al Green's *Back Up Train*, drum programming from RZA and Outkast, and were listening to a lot of The Impressions, John Lennon, Wu-Tang, Madlib, and Screamin' Jay Hawkins."

The album's title track is a soporific, woozy neo-soul shuffle that emerged from Hakim's subconscious. "It's a song that reflects on a strange recurring dream I had," he explains. "Two little green babies run around on the sidewalk, and then they run into the street and get run over by a car. I decided to make it the album title, because it was the first song I wrote before any of these other songs came along, and it just felt right to call a body of work after these mysterious, green twins that were running around in my subconscious…"

The move to New York proved pivotal to the writing and recording of *Green Twins*, although it was not without its struggles for Hakim. "Moving to a new town will have a huge impact on anyone's state of mind and quality of life," he says, "especially a town like New York. A lot of people move to a city like New York with a job lined up or some kind of secure situation. It's an expensive town… so my first three years revolved around making money, pay cheque to pay cheque, while trying to write an album."

One of those jobs involved working in Brooklyn record store Human Head, where Hakim was surrounded by temptation. "I like to collect all kinds of things," he says. "I just recently got an original pressing of *Clube Da Esquina* by Milton Nascimento & Lô Borges."

After selling out London's The Dome in April, Hakim returns to the UK later this year. "That was the biggest show I've ever played as a headliner," he recalls. "It was an extremely special night. Jamie Isaac played a set before us, which was incredible. We play Koko in November!" ●

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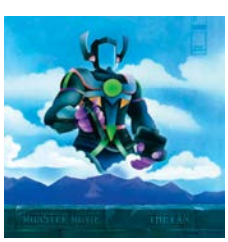
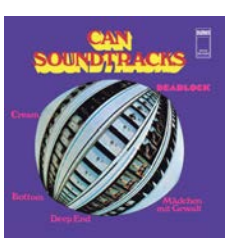

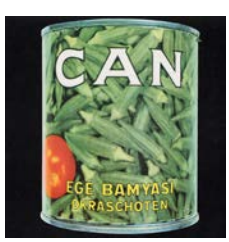

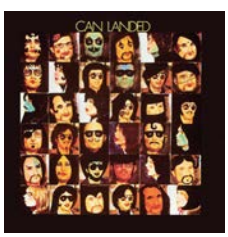

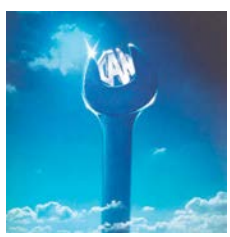

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SPOON

COLOURBOX EXHIBITED

Wolfgang Tillmans curates a compilation of Colourbox, the band he used to soundtrack his recent Tate exhibition

Artist Wolfgang Tillmans showcased the music of Colourbox in an exhibition at his Between Bridges studio space in Berlin in 2014

If you attended Wolfgang Tillmans' 2017 exhibition at the Tate Modern, which ran from 15 February to 11 June, you might have been lucky enough to pick up a strictly limited-edition 4AD vinyl release. The Turner Prize-winning artist compiled *Music Of The Band (1982-1987)*, a new Colourbox compilation, as a soundtrack to the exhibition. "Brothers Martyn and Steven Young – together with Ian Robbins, Lorita Grahame (pictured) and Debian Curry – were pioneers of experimental pop music," Tillmans explains. "They created an eclectic sound, drawing from reggae and soul influences, beatbox-driven hip-hop rhythms, blue-eyed soul, as well as a fusion of far-ranging influences spanning from classic R&B, to dub and industrial…

"Using montages of analogue magnetic tape pieces and experimenting with tape machines, Colourbox were at the forefront of sampling which, in its digital form, would become ubiquitous over the course of the 1980s.

"The band worked in a seeming contrast of pure artistic research in the studio and an anti-intellectual stance towards the outside world."

GROOVIN' AND SUPERSTYLIN'

With their sophomore album *Vertigo* first off the starting blocks, Groove Armada kick off a major vinyl-reissue series this month. Each will be a triple-12" pack. The million-selling *Vertigo* will be joined by *Goodbye Country (Hello Nightclub)*, the former having sold so well thanks to the coffee-table chillout of *At The River*, while the latter presented a harder sound with the hit single *Superstylin'*. Both are released on 28 July, with the band's fifth and sixth albums – *Lovebox* and *Soundboy Rock* – also set for reissue, we're told, "within the next year". But there's no word yet on any bonus tracks, or vinyl reissues of their early independent gems, the *Northern Star* album and their breakthrough series of 12" singles for the Tummy Touch label.

DOORS ON FIRE

The 50th anniversary of The Doors' debut single *Light My Fire* is marked with a 7" reissue of the original Japanese edition. Limited to 7,500 copies, this will be released on 28 July, the day before the single went to No. 1 in the USA in 1967. Only the song's titles are in English on the front cover of this accurate replica.

LOWE BACK

Yep Roc embark on a three-stage vinyl-reissue series of Stiff Records alumni Nick Lowe this month. 14 July sees the reissue of *Nick The Knife* and *The Abominable Showman*. Then, on 25 August, new editions of *Nick Lowe And His Cowboy Outfit* and *The Rose Of England* before finally, on 20 October, *Pinker And Prouder Than Previous* and *Party Of One*.

Summer Sun

The 10th biggest-selling release at this year's Record Store Day turned out to be *Really Rock 'Em Right*, Volume Four of ORG Records' compilations of gems from the Sun Records back catalogue. But you won't need to wait until next April for further rock 'n' roll delights on record, as ORG have been talking *Long Live Vinyl* through their release schedule for the rest of this year.

This autumn will see the release of *Sun Records Does Hank Williams* on single-disc black vinyl, which gathers Williams covers by artists including Johnny Cash and Jerry Lee Lewis. Back in 2014, ORG did a very limited coloured-vinyl reissue of Roy Orbison's debut *At The Rock House* for Black Friday. 14 July will finally see a less-limited, standard black-vinyl edition.

It will be followed a week later, on 21 July, with an 'Indie Exclusive edition' of Carl Perkins' *Best Of The Sun Records Sessions*, limited to just 500 copies on cream-coloured vinyl.

Specially remastered, it includes standards such as *Roll Over Beethoven* and *Blue Suede Shoes*. And finally, on 28 July, ORG release another 500-edition coloured vinyl – this time on red – of Johnny Cash's *Greatest!*. Cash's fourth album, it was originally released on Sun Records in 1959.

IAN PEEL'S LINER NOTES

"It's hard to choose which of the covers in this issue's Banned Sleeves feature is the most shocking," muses *Long Live Vinyl's* Ian Peel, "but Pet Shop Boys' *Before* is certainly the most striking…"

Back in 2009, I interviewed Neil Tennant during rehearsals for a very special live performance. The Pet Shop Boys were days away from delivering a mesmerising end-of-show performance at the Brit Awards, being that year's recipients of the Outstanding Contribution To British Music Award.

The discussion was largely about the duo's recent album, *Fundamental,* and Neil's work with Rufus Wainwright on his *Release The Stars* album. But we couldn't resist going off on a tangent and talking about vinyl – and that sleeve.

"That's our rarest release now, *The Truck Driver And His Mate* 12" with the two penises, isn't it?" Neil mused. "We did, as a joke, a dance 12" of the song *Before* in the mid-90s, with a limp penis on the cover. And then, when we did the B-side, *The Truck Driver And His Mate*, we had the bright idea of doing the truck driver, penis number one, and his mate, penis number two. That's just very silly, but it's a really good track, actually.

"The funny thing about the sleeve was that we thought the record company would be horrified. But Atlantic records in America wanted to release it commercially and we prudish Brits said 'No,' so that served us right!"

For me, personally, it was the 10" version of *West End Girls* that gave me the record-collecting bug. With its special mix and extra lyrics – sitting inside a round, fold-out sleeve, sealed with an arty sticker – it introduced me to just how creative and elaborate a vinyl record could be.

But, funnily enough, I'd bought it quite by accident. Or rather as a consolation prize, as the 12" version was sold out. I'd headed out to my local record shop, Music Market in Newbury, one Saturday morning to buy *West End Girls*, thinking, 'This is a song that has to be bought on 12"'. But they'd sold out, so I spotted the 10" version and grabbed that instead. Which then opened up this whole new world of wonder.

> ***"In those days, there weren't so many rules about formats… Every week, Parlophone put out a new one"***
> **NEIL TENNANT**

"Well, that 10" version was only on sale for a week," Neil told me, years later.

"In those days, there weren't so many rules about formats, which was great. And so Parlophone did a really good job: every week, they were putting out a new format to give it an extra shove up the charts. So *West End Girls* went through a load of different formats. And so did *Love Comes Quickly,* which got a weird 10" in just a plastic bag with a poster. It's actually not 'designed'. We weren't very happy about it at the time. But we were all in a panic (to put it out quickly), because it had charted low."

But the rarest, most coveted Pet Shop Boys record of all? You can but imagine, as it wasn't even pressed. "There's this legendary question, of course," Neil teases, "which is 'was there a picture disc of *West End Girls*?' Because one was designed, but it was never made. But it *did* have a catalogue number." ●

DIGGING FOR VICTORY

In his new column, Resolution Records owner **Mark O'Shaughnessy** recalls an unlikely record-buying trip that ended in glory

Amongst other topics, I'm going to use this column to recall some of my record-digging stories from down the years and to try to give a flavour of what it was like to hit a huge payload of valuable records out there in the boondocks. During the 1990s through to the early 2000s, I used to travel the world on record-digging trips. We never called it 'vinyl' back then – it was simply 'records', or 'wax', or 'black gold' or 'gear'… the fact that it was vinyl itself we were looking for was never in question.

No destination was out of bounds – South Africa, Japan, Canada, USA, Scandinavia, Ireland, plus every single country you can think of in Europe – you name a place, I trawled there. Even Hong Kong was hit. But sometimes, you don't need to look too far afield to come across THE most amazing stuff… read on. Earlier this year, in February at a guess, an old man came into my store and asked if I had any jazz records. I showed him the sections and he had a 20-second look through one of the boxes and then walked out – no goodbye, not a "thank you"… nothing.

> ***"This teeny council house was packed – floor to ceiling – with rare books, mountains of CDs, cassettes, high-end hi-fi gear and… records"***

Next week, in he came again, and this time asked for rock – same thing: looked at the first two records and then wandered off. Next time he came in, he asked, "Do you buy these things, then?" I refrained from answering sarcastically and simply said, "Yes". He then told me that a family member had recently died and wondered if I would be interested in looking at the records. "How many are there?" I asked. "Oh, just a few," he said. About 40 or 50, he thought. I tried to find out what was there, but he didn't seem to know. "Old stuff, you know?" he mumbled.

Well, I've been down this road before – as have all record-shop owners – but, given his age (in his late 60s, I guessed), I knew that I had to go there and look. We arranged my visit (he had no phone, this was all done in writing) and I asked him what door number it was. He said he couldn't remember his own door number! I asked him how I would know which house it was and he told me he'd tie a copy of a book to his garden gate, so that I'd know which house it was. By now I was REALLY intrigued…

I arrived in plenty of time. The house was literally four minutes from where I live in central Bath, so I had no reason to be late, and in I went. This teeny council house was packed – floor to ceiling – with rare books, mountains of CDs, cassettes, high-end hi-fi gear and… records (the book on the gate was Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, by the way).

As we climbed the stairs, I spotted a teetering pile of horizontally stacked records on the landing (this is how our little man had chosen to display the records for me). The very first record I recognised was Nucleus's *Elastic Rock* LP. I picked it off the top of the heap calmly, removed the vinyl from the mint sleeve and took a look at the wax – it WAS unplayed, a £200 nugget all day long. My brain suddenly kicked into overdrive and I started taking the records from the top of the stack, one by one… careful now Mark, nice and cool.

As they came off, it was like an A-Z of (rare) UK jazz, blues and prog rock from the golden era of the 1960s and 1970s – you name it and it was in there: Bakerloo on Harvest, Tubby Hayes on Fontana, Mighty Baby on Head, John Surman on Deram, to name just a few. They were literally immaculate. The little man (5' 1" tall, tops) told me that they'd been played only once to record to cassette tape and then put away, a record-dealer's dream – all originals and not a reissue in sight… oh Jeez!

Our little man's 40 or 50 records were actually nearer 1,500 items. I'm still sorting through them now, almost five months later – they're mostly still boxed in my storage. It took me three visits to excavate them all from the various hidey-holes around the house where they were stashed.

I called in a trusted local colleague to give me a hand and we cleared the whole place – the CDs were insanely good, too – and I have some of the hi-fi gear in use at my new store. Don't even get me started on the books…

It cost me a lot of money, but this hit was amongst the best five collections I've seen in my 25 years in the record-dealing game – an exhilarating hit, and the kind of thing that makes the daily grind worthwhile. ●

RAMONES HOME AGAIN

Some of the cornerstones of punk rock – tracks such as *Pinhead*, *California Sun* and *Swallow My Pride* are featured on the soon-to-be-released 40th Anniversary reissue of The Ramones' second album, *Leave Home*. The album is only 30 minutes long, but will be expanded to a four-disc set. The first three discs are CDs containing the original LP, a new remastered version, the 15-track Sundragon Rough Mixes and 18 tracks of 40th Anniversary Extras.

The vinyl element comes in the form of the 14-track 40th Anniversary Mix on one disc. All of this will also be available in an extra, specially packaged edition which comes inside a 12"x12" hard-cover book of which, we're told, only 15,000 copies will be pressed.

MOSES' JOURNEY

MOBO Award-winning jazz duo Binker Golding and Moses Boyd have signed to vinyl-led label Gearbox, who will release their new album *Journey To The Mountain Of Forever* on 28 July.

The duo finished the album in Gearbox's renowned in-house mastering studio and, though largely sax-based, the set takes in elements of grime, hip-hop and electronica. "*Journey To The Mountain of Forever* is a two-record set," Gearbox tells *Long Live Vinyl*. "The first disc features the duo on their own, while on the second they are joined by the great UK free-jazz saxophonist Evan Parker, trumpeter Byron Wallen, harpist Tori Handsley, tabla player Sarathy Korwar and drummer Yussef Dayes."

BELINDA'S HEAVEN

Mark 29 September in your diary if you feel the need for a helping of 80s-powerchord pomp pop in your vinyl collection. Demon Records will unleash a Deluxe boxset edition of Belinda Carlisle's breakthrough solo album, *Heaven On Earth*. The LP has been spread across four heavyweight discs, and there's a bonus CD containing the 7" A-side single edits and remixes, together with live versions of the album's singles recorded at dates from Belinda's 1988 tour.

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Our friends at 991.com trawl through the crates and bring us four more prized collectables. All values are for mint or near-mint condition copies

FAITH NO MORE…

FOOL FOR A LIFETIME
KING FOR A DAY

This 1995 UK double LP was pressed on red vinyl and housed in a single-pocket picture sleeve. In mint condition, these are now fetching around £85.

Value **£85**

QUEEN

HAMMER TO FALL

The magnificent withdrawn 'live' glossy picture sleeve version is very desirable. It was falsely reported that the sleeve was withdrawn at the request of Brian May. Yet according to May's own website, the record company felt the sleeve was misleading – he actually preferred it.

Value **£200**

DEPECHE MODE

MUSIC FOR THE MASSES

In 1987, this was pressed to clear vinyl and came with an illustrated lyric inner and textured and embossed picture sleeve. Black copies are fairly common, but if you've got this clear version, you could see it fetch over £150, if mint.

Value **£150+**

SMASHING PUMPKINS

SIAMESE DREAM

Siamese Dream – the 1993 US-exclusive limited-edition 13-track double LP – was pressed on orange marbled vinyl and came in a glossy sleeve. Black versions are fairly common, but the orange vinyl is now very scarce. CAROL17401 is currently fetching around £75.

Value **£75**

STUDIO
SNAPSHOT

BOB DYLAN

Columbia Recording Studio, New York City

Prior to recording his fifth studio album, *Bringing It All Back Home,* in Columbia's Studio A over three days in January 1965, Bob Dylan had been criticised by the folk fraternity for the increasing introspection and self-absorption in his lyrics. Rather than enter into a hair-splitting contest, his response was simply to completely reinvent the genre. The singer had spent the summer of 1964 at his typewriter in Woodstock, and his red-wine-and-cigarettes-fuelled midnight ramblings had resulted in an extraordinary lyrical transformation that ranged from the effortless surrealism of hippie hymnal *Mr. Tambourine Man,* through the sneeringly iconoclastic *It's Alright Ma (I'm Only Bleeding),* to the intimate-yet-universal imagery of *Love Minus Zero/No Limit.* Most subversive were *Subterranean Homesick Blues* and *Maggie's Farm* – recorded, like the whole of Side One of the LP, with an electrified backing band, melding folk with rock to seismic cultural effect.

HI-FIDELITY SOUND SELECTIONS
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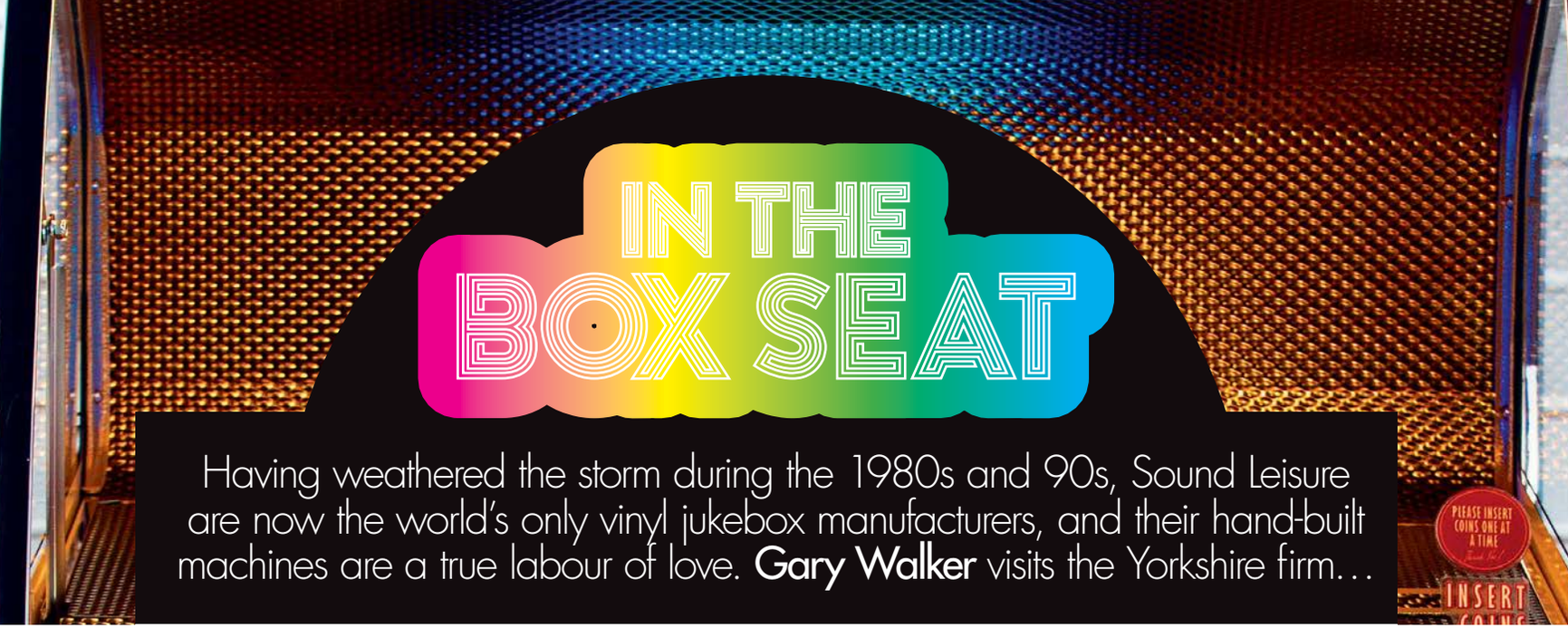


IN THE BOX SEAT

Having weathered the storm during the 1980s and 90s, Sound Leisure are now the world's only vinyl jukebox manufacturers, and their hand-built machines are a true labour of love. **Gary Walker** visits the Yorkshire firm…

Despite the resurgence of interest in vinyl that has swept across the musical landscape over the past five years, a family-run Yorkshire company can proudly lay claim to being the world's sole manufacturer of vinyl jukeboxes. Established in 1978, Yorkshire's Sound Leisure are the safe guardians of two generations of experience – the custodians of a skillset that has been largely forgotten amid the irresistible advance of digital technology across the music industry.

As the vinyl economy withered in the 1980s, 90s and early 2000s in the face of competition from newly invented CDs and a second wave of attack in the shape of mp3s and streaming sites, the vinyl jukebox industry was dealt another hefty blow in the shape of the transformative effect the smoking ban had on the pub trade.

However, throughout all those formidable challenges, Sound Leisure – set up by Alan Black and now run by his son Chris – stood firm, diversifying into CD and digital machines, and they're now reaping the rewards, shipping vinyl jukeboxes to all corners of the globe and enjoying unprecedented success.

In 2017, Sound Leisure are the world's only vinyl jukebox builders, employing around 100 staff, and vinyl now accounts for around half of the company's business. It's a true homegrown, family-run vinyl success story.

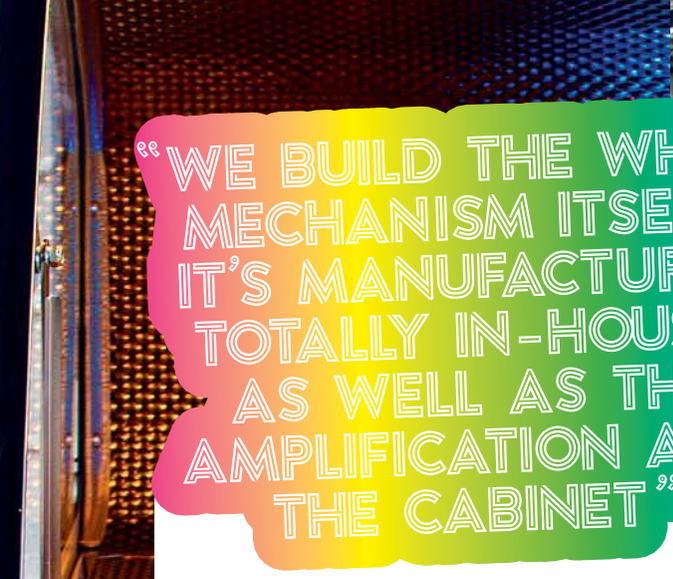
"We're now the only people in the world doing a vinyl jukebox," Chris tells *Long Live Vinyl*. "A lot of people have lost the skillset to do it. We're building jukeboxes every day of the week. What we were doing 20 to 30 years ago, it's virtually impossible to find a supplier to do – building a cartridge with space for two needles – an A-side and a B-side on the same cartridge, trying to find a stylus that'll fit, the mechanics that people don't really understand anymore, and down the supply chain, too."

JUKES SPIRIT

"Some of the components we need, trying to get people to understand is difficult," explains Chris. "It's like building a Swiss watch. My father is still working here at the age of 72. Phil, our first employee, is still here, too, so the two people who originally built the mechanism are working on it this time round. They've been teaching the younger guys on the shop floor how to do it, and it's amazing, in a gap of just 30 years, how skills have been lost in the UK as a manufacturing platform.

"We started redeveloping the vinyl jukebox three years ago. When the business started, it was all vinyl and unfortunately for my father, within eight years of him coming up with the mechanism and all the

> "WE'RE THE ONLY PEOPLE DOING A VINYL JUKEBOX. A LOT OF PEOPLE HAVE LOST THE SKILLSET"



> "WE BUILD THE WHOLE MECHANISM ITSELF. IT'S MANUFACTURED TOTALLY IN-HOUSE, AS WELL AS THE AMPLIFICATION AND THE CABINET"

electronics and building everything round it, the world went crazy on CDs. Vinyl had been going for 80 years – he came in at the last eight years, and then CDs happened. We re-engineered for CD and then launched a digital system at the same time, in 1988. It's taken a long time for digital to catch up.

"About three years ago, we looked at the old mechanism and tried to simplify what we'd done before to make it cost-effective to build again, and at the same time, sales of vinyl have gone through the roof and we've been able to jump on the back of that – but we do see it as a long-term thing this time."

Nothing on Sound Leisure's range of vinyl jukeboxes is outsourced: not even the turntable, stylus or amplifier elements of the company's designs. That workmanship, of course, comes at a price, with the Vinyl Rocket – individually numbered and featuring a unique rotating mechanism that can play both A and B sides – retailing at £8,000.

"We build the whole mechanism itself," says Chris. "It holds 70 records and plays A-sides and B-sides, dinked or undinked. It's manufactured totally in-house, as well as the amplification and the cabinet. We're doing everything you see in the machine.

"When the business was started in 1978, my father wanted – within reason – to be self-sufficient, so he could bring the right group of people in. We've got engineers, metalworkers, woodworkers, cabinet makers, electronics engineers, designers and creative people, and a plastic works – our own little world. There's a really high skillset within the business, which means we can come up with some of these fantastic machines.

"We came into a market that was dominated by the big American businesses. They'd been building machines for nearly 100 years when we started, and to break into a market like that, you've got to look at what you do. You've got two options: do it cheap, which is not something we like to do, as you're on a downward fight to the bottom; or you can do it the best you can and every day try to improve the product – and that's what we've done."

DESIGNED FOR LIFE

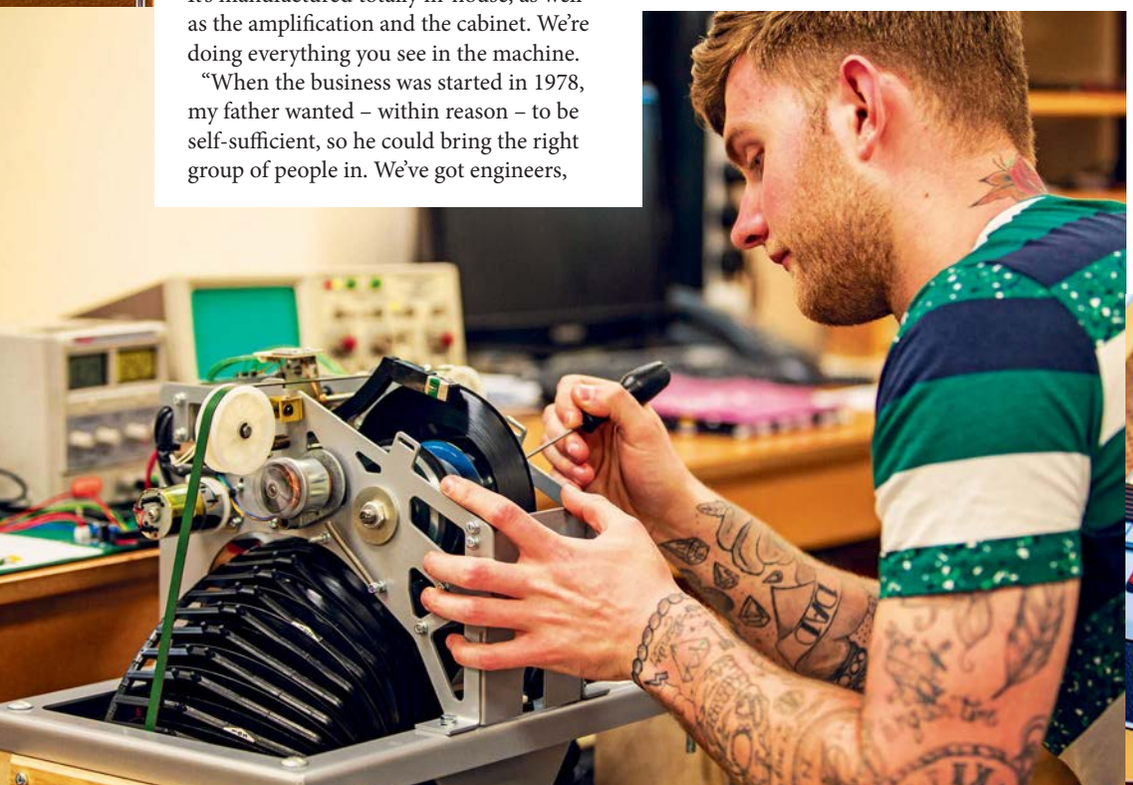
The built-to-last ethos is evident in everything Sound Leisure do, and Chris and his team pride themselves on supplying jukeboxes that will last a lifetime – whether that's in a busy pub, in the home of a record collector or even aboard a luxury yacht. Each machine takes 70 to 80 hours to build, passing through around 30 pairs of hands along the way. It's an approach that is clearly working – 2016 was the company's busiest year to date and there's now a three-month waiting list for their vinyl jukeboxes.

"We use natural products," says Chris. "We work a lot with wood and all the castings on the machines are solid aluminium, not plastic. We've tried to go for quality all the way through. If they're going into a restaurant or a bar, they can take the abuse they're getting, working seven days a week, 15 to 18 hours a day, sometimes in very hostile conditions. We wanted them to be strong enough to go into a commercial location, but also good enough quality to go into people's homes, and more and more, that's where we see them go now."

We ask Chris whether he fears Sound Leisure's position as sole manufacturers will be challenged, but he's confident their status is secure. "For someone to set up what we've got in Leeds would cost them millions to do now. Since we've launched the vinyl jukebox, touch wood, it's proving the right thing to do.

"We supply from 18-year-olds to 80-year-olds and deliver from council houses to castles and everyone inbetween. We've built bespoke machines for Jägermeister, Jack Daniel's and Sailor Jerry, and put a machine in St Pancras station. We also get people who've just retired and have always wanted one, people who ring up and say, 'I want one on my yacht'…" ●

For more info on Sound Leisure's range of vinyl jukeboxes, go to soundleisure.com



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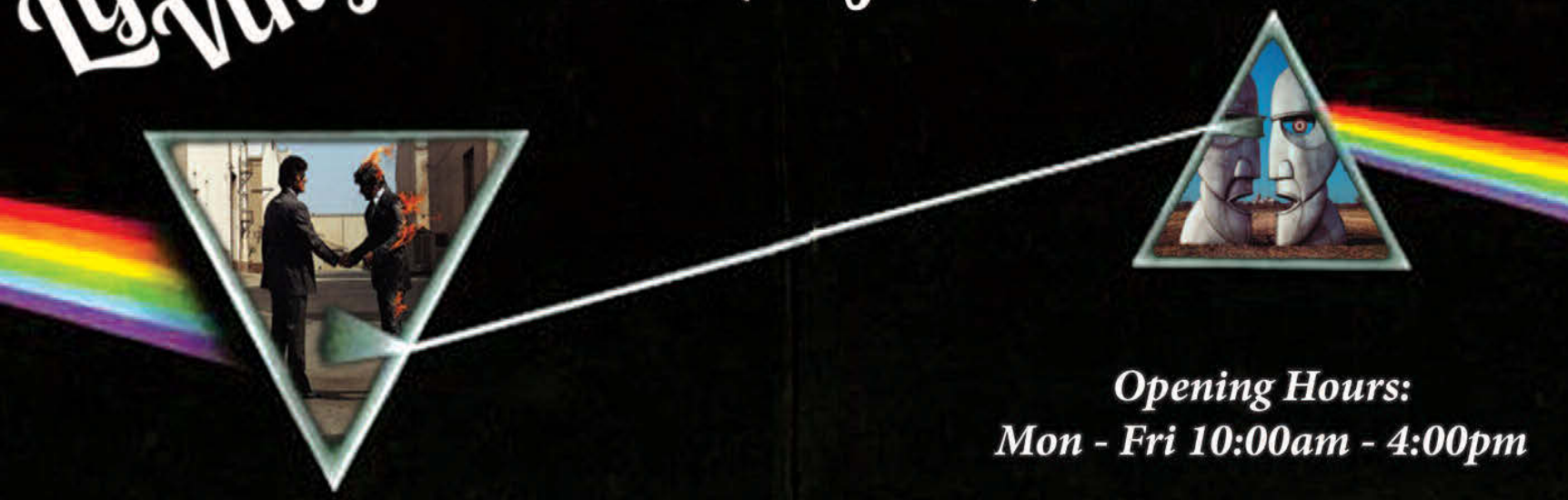

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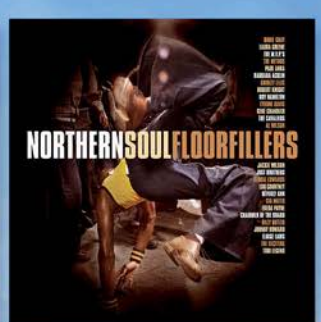

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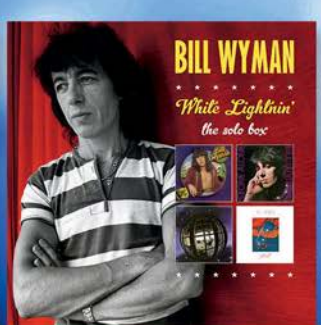

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BANNED

BANNED

Ian Peel heads out on a quest to curate the ultimate gallery collection of album and single covers – from the 60s to the present day – that have shocked the censors and been banned by the record stores…

Vinyl sleeve art has the power to evoke reactions in us that are every bit as powerful as the music it accompanies. It can be striking, emotional and artistic. It can be brilliant, provocative and inspiring. It can overstep the mark and catch the unwanted attention of the censors – and in some of the examples here, it can be downright distasteful.

Long Live Vinyl has curated a gallery exhibition of the most contentious, alarming and shocking examples of sleeve art ever produced – from The Beatles donning butchers' coats in 1966 and causing havoc in the US, through to Lady Gaga's provocative *Artpop* resulting in controversy in China. To quote a line from one of our sleeve art subjects, Frankie Goes To Hollywood, this will be 'Big, Banned & Beautiful'.

It has to be said, though, that no sleeve art has ever truly been banned. There is no governing body of taste in the music business, in the way that the movie industry has the British Board of Film Classification.

Consequently, record sleeves might be banned – or, rather, cause outrage and uproar – at any one of a number of stages in the production process. The artist themselves might have second thoughts, or sometimes, the label will react in horror to what the band or their designer have come up with. At other times, the entire process goes smoothly – until the record stores or the record buyers see the end product…

There have been many sleeves over the years that have set out to shock, been designed in very poor taste or been simply a 'product of their times'. None of those are included here. What this exhibition sets out to curate are the sleeves that may have been banned by one party or another but, nonetheless, each represents a contentious and defining moment in the intertwined histories of music, vinyl and graphic design.

The Mamas & The Papas

IF YOU CAN BELIEVE YOUR EYES AND EARS **1966**

This 1966 album must surely scoop the award for the most ridiculous reason for a ban in this whole collection. While it was understandable that retailers would baulk at the chainsaw massacre of The Beatles' *Yesterday And Today*, you can see just how fearful they were of offending buyers since – in the same year – they also refused to stock this, the debut album from The Mamas & The Papas. Featuring the likes of *Monday, Monday*; *California Dreamin'* and *The 'In' Crowd*, it all looks innocent enough – that is, until you look to the right and see the inclusion of a toilet. Never before had such a thing been seen on a record cover, and retailers were up in arms. There was an easy fix: the tracklisting was added over the offending pan. Pre-censored editions still fetch about £200, though that's small change compared to £15,000 for an un-stickered *Yesterday And Today*. At least they didn't leave the seat up.

The Jimi Hendrix Experience

AXIS: BOLD AS LOVE **1967**

The first of two Jimi Hendrix covers to cause controversy in our 60s gallery. *Axis…* was the maestro's second studio album, which *Rolling Stone* reviewed upon release as "the refinement of white noise into psychedelia... the finest voodoo album that any rock group has produced to date".

Hendrix claimed he had no involvement with the cover design whatsoever and was disappointed when he saw the finished article: a painting of the Experience by Roger Law, based on a photo by Karl Ferris, which turned them into a vision of Vishnu. "The three of us have nothing to do with what's on the *Axis* cover," Hendrix stated, feeling that, if anything, his American Indian heritage would have been a better focus.

While complaints about the cover simmered over the decades that followed, it was only as recently as 2014 that the Malaysian government's Home Ministry went as far as responding to them, and issued a ban on the artwork being imported or sold.

CENSORSHIP, YESTERDAY AND TODAY…

The Beatles' *Yesterday And Today* was not only the first banned sleeve in our virtual exhibition, but also the one that remains most shocking, even to this day. "The Beatles were just beginning to win over kids' parents with songs like *Yesterday*," Todd Rundgren told us when asked for his feedback on the covers included here. "Then, suddenly, they're butchering babies! It was an indication the band wasn't simply a musical phenomenon, but a subversive force. Although the cover was withdrawn, The Beatles went on to challenge the norms of religion, politics and drug consumption."

John Lennon & Yoko Ono

UNFINISHED MUSIC NO. 1: TWO VIRGINS **1968**

Though simple, direct and completely natural, this remains possibly the most shocking album front cover of all time. Not least because it was the debut solo release from an already-iconic musician. Digging back through a dusty old copy of *Billboard* magazine, we find that *…Two Virgins* made the front page of its 14 December 1968 edition. "The controversial John Lennon-Yoko Ono album *Two Virgins* will be banned in at least five major record retailers here," Bruce Weber reported. "The general opinion from record buyers at the five chains is that the nude cover is obscene."

For some, censorship wasn't even an option. Tetragrammaton, Apple's distributor for the US and Canada, planned to add an opaque cover, obscuring everything but John and Yoko's faces. But, as *Billboard* reported, "even in that state, the album will be unacceptable, according to a record buyer at the 16-store May Co". US chain Sears took the album out of 800 stores and issued a statement announcing: "We don't carry any product that might harm our reputation as a family store."

The Beatles

YESTERDAY AND TODAY **1966**

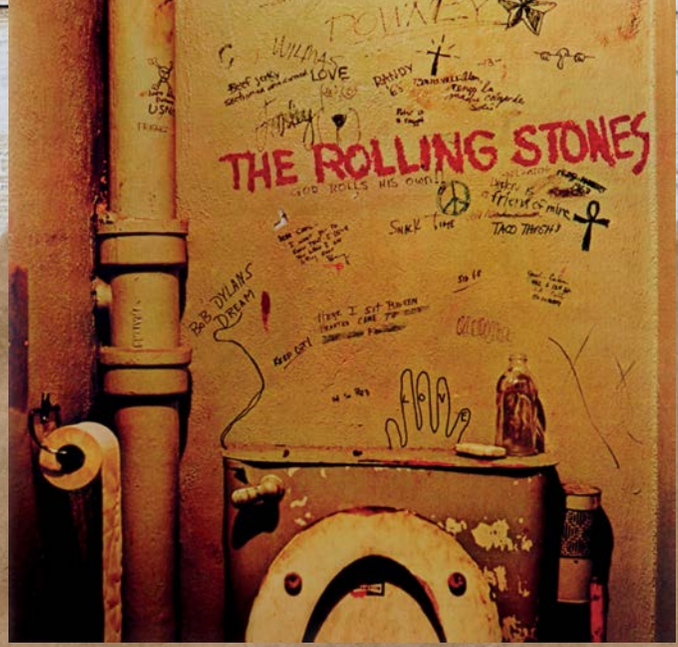
In March 1966, The Beatles posed wearing butchers' aprons surrounded by dismembered parts of baby dolls and various cuts of raw meat. It was part of a surreal photo essay, A Somnambulant Adventure by Robert Whitaker, and was used in the advertisement for *Paperback Writer*. But when Capitol Records used it as the front cover of this stop-gap Best Of, all hell broke loose. In a letter sent to retailers by Capitol on 14 June 1966, the label's president Alan W Livingston explained the situation and hinted at different moral codes in the UK and USA. "The original cover, created in England, was intended as 'pop art' satire," he stated. "However, a sampling of public opinion in the United States indicated that the cover design is subject to misinterpretation. For this reason, and to avoid any possible controversy, or undeserved harm to The Beatles' image or reputation, Capitol has chosen to withdraw the LP and substitute a more generally acceptable design." The replacement design was placed as a sticker over the 750,000 copies that had already been pressed, sending the few uncensored copies skyrocketing in value.

Sergio Mendes & Brasil '66

FOOL ON THE HILL **1968**

A very meticulous, pre-computer-era piece of Photoshopping, art director Tom Wilkes cropped a photo of the bossa-nova supergroup and placed them on what looks, at first glance, like sand dunes in the desert. It's only when you turn over and look at the continuation of the photo on the rear cover that you realise the sand dunes are in fact a naked woman's body, with – and imagine the shock in 1968 – one particular topographic feature being a bare breast.

Sears stores were one of numerous chains in the US that refused to stock the album – produced by Herb Alpert for his A&M Records – as a result. In fact, a Sears buyer mentioned the design during the furore over …*Two Virgins* and felt it was a work of art by comparison. "One is prepared tastefully," they said of Sergio Mendes' LP, "while the other is dirty". A big rectangular sticker – 'This album contains the hit singles *Scarborough Fair* and *Fool On The Hill*' – was quickly added to fix the boob.



The Rolling Stones

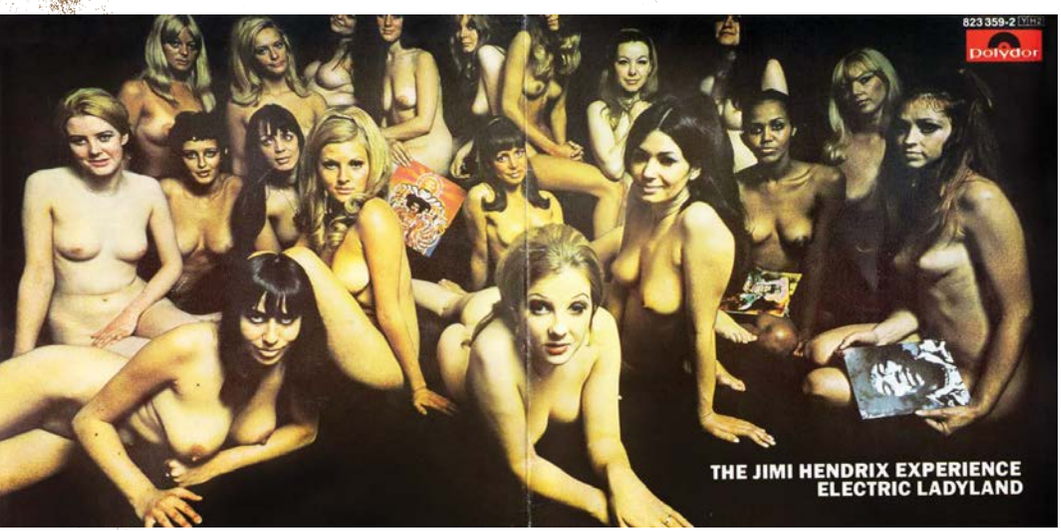
BEGGARS BANQUET **1968**

The Stones should have learned something from – but chose to ignore – the experience of The Mamas & The Papas just two years earlier with the release of *If You Can Believe Your Eyes And Ears*. The bottom line? Toilets were just not for public view, and certainly not on a record cover. The band's label rejected their planned photo before the record was even manufactured. In fact, it went completely unseen until the era of mid-80s CD reissues. Said to have been taken at a Porsche garage in Los Angeles, there wasn't even anything particularly edgy about the original image, save for a sly reference to Bob Dylan's career going down the pan, with the scrawled mention of 'Bob Dylan's Dream' alongside an arrow to the flush handle. The public convenience was replaced with the much more publicly palatable 'invitation' sleeve, with the group's name and the album title in a fine, classic font – the sort of thing you might expect to see on an invitation to Buckingham Palace – alluding much more to the banquet than the beggars.

The Jimi Hendrix Experience

ELECTRIC LADYLAND **1968**

According to the liner notes of the 1997 reissue of … *Ladyland*, Jimi Hendrix knew exactly what he wanted for this cover before the album was even completed. He wrote to his US label, Reprise Records, asking for a Linda Eastman photo of the group posing around an Alice In Wonderland sculpture that had been taken in Central Park. But Reprise ignored his wishes and used another Eastman photo, a close-up of his face. And Track Records, his UK label, went one stage further and used a photo by David Montgomery of 19 naked women lounging around holding various Hendrix sleeves, including the already artist-infuriating *Axis: Bold As Love*. The star was embarrassed and US retailers took one look and refused to stock it. "The controversial UK cover with a number of young nude ladies will not be seen," declared *Billboard* magazine in their 21 December 1968 edition, though UK retailers thought on their feet and stocked the original pressing, just racking it with the gatefold turned inside out.



The Rolling Stones

STICKY FINGERS **1971**

The evidence is clear from this section of our virtual exhibition: when it came to the potent subversive power of rock 'n' roll, the Stones and Jimi Hendrix were at the forefront in the late 60s/early 70s. And this one is perhaps the most collectible of all, as it has the attraction of being designed by Andy Warhol, using a photograph by Billy Name and graphic design by Craig Braun. While most have assumed that the unzippable jeans were those of Mick Jagger, apparently he never attended the photo session for the album, with various members of Warhol's Factory since coming forward to claim the crotch as theirs. Either way, this was all too much for the Spanish government, which banned the sleeve for sale or display for being "offensive for the Catholic church". Although freely available elsewhere, it was the Spanish ban that led to the design of the alternate – and much more horrifying to most – sleeve created by the Stones' logo designer John Pasche, showing fingers emerging from a can of treacle.

ART, WEED AND FRUSTRATIONS...

Guitarist and co-founder of Midnight Oil, Jim Moginie, is also quite the Beatles-ologist and gravitated straight to the *Yesterday And Today* cover in our exhibition. "The 'butcher cover' is still shocking, as the Mop Tops (as Dylan noted), 'didn't want to be moptops anymore'," he told us. "Influenced by conceptual art, weed, the frustrations of being hounded 24/7 by fans and the media, plus not being heard at their gigs, this 1966 grab-bag compilation album was the result. Lennon called the cover 'as relevant as Vietnam' and Paul McCartney was instrumental in pushing for it, though George Martin argued, Britishly, that it was in 'poor taste'."

ON *DIAMOND DOGS*, BOWIE METAMORPHOSED INTO A MUTANT CANINE

David Bowie

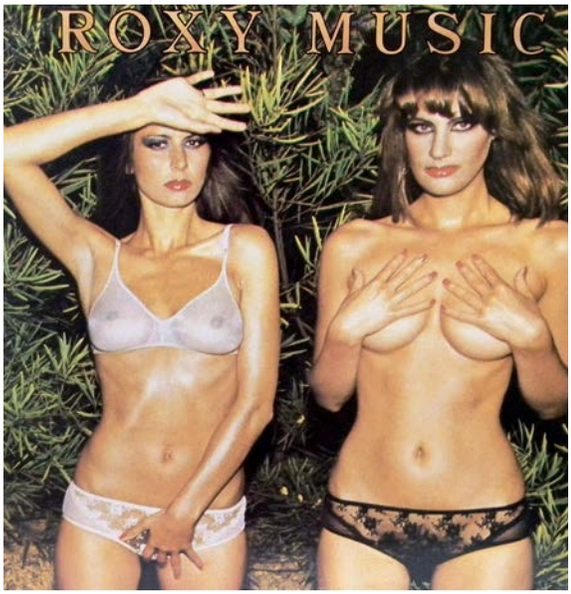
DIAMOND DOGS **1974**

Bowie trumped Roxy Music for the most talked-about sleeve of 1974 with the release of *Diamond Dogs*, "on which he metamorphosed into a mutant canine", explains Bowie-ologist Peter Doggett in *The Man Who Sold The World, David Bowie And The 1970s*, "just as the inner gatefold of *Aladdin Sane* had seen his body morph into a creature without sexual organs." But the design – by Guy Peellaert, who had come recommended to Bowie by Mick Jagger – "had to be airbrushed into decency before the record was released". Before the airbrushing took place, some copies of the gatefold design were distributed to retailers by RCA sales teams. Although reissued in uncensored form by Rykodisc in the mid-90s, the RCA pressing (which never got as far as having the vinyl LP actually inserted) is one of the biggest prizes for Bowie collectors. In 2003, one fetched $3,550 on eBay thanks to – as Bowie's official website noted – "the magic combination of RCA logo and dog's cock intact."

Roxy Music

COUNTRY LIFE **1974**

A cover that links Roxy Music with Can, as it was the German experimentalists' Constanze Karoli whose cousin and girlfriend adorned this cover, shot by photographer Eric Boman. But in the US, Spain and The Netherlands, the photo was way too much for retailers. The US went with a green sticker over the offending image, while Spain enlarged the left-hand model's face to fill the 12" canvas. Other territories opted for a version showing just the fir trees from the background or the branches from the rear cover. While many felt that the group had left the art-house, *Vogue* style of previous releases for a more exploitative approach to selling records, in Simon Frith and Howard Horne's 1987 book *Art Into Pop*, the authors compared *Country Life* with Patti Smith's *Horses* as an example of album art taking a step forwards for women, rather than backwards. "These were sexy images, but presented without the sentimentality of bohemianism," they said. "Not pin-ups, but comments on pin-ups. And once pop stars began exploring the semiology of glamour, then women could employ their superior experience and expertise."



Pink Floyd

WISH YOU WERE HERE **1975**

One of the most iconic of all of Hipgnosis' classic works of sleeve art, the 'burning man' was deemed too risqué for many stores, who asked for it to be censored. According to *American Photo* magazine's 2008 round-up of 'the coolest, sexiest, most iconic photo album covers ever,' the censorship came in the form of "a navy plastic wrap (black in Europe) to accent its themes of 'nothingness' and the fallacies of fame." Taken by Hipgnosis' Storm Thorgerson, he based the idea of the handshake on the Floyd songs *Welcome To The Machine* and *Have A Cigar,* and chose two stuntmen – Ronnie Rondell on the right and Danny Rogers on the left – for the real-life, pre-Photoshop shoot. Although the idea for the picture came to Thorgerson while on tour with the group, he settled on the Warner Bros. studios lot in Burbank, California for the shoot. And, if you want to find the exact spot, there are Warner Studios tour maps on Floyd fan sites with the exact location marked.

Scorpions

LOVEDRIVE **1979**

Another Hipgnosis design and Storm Thorgerson photo, and another album cover that received a ban in the US. The 'surreal groping' on this front cover nonetheless won *Playboy* magazine's 'Best Album Sleeve Of 1979' but still had to be replaced in all US stores with something less overt (and not, in this case, by the back cover, which was even more revealing). But as far as the group were concerned, it all came as quite a surprise. "We never did it on purpose, we just did not know it would be a problem in America, it was just sex and rock 'n' roll," Scorpions vocalist Klaus Meine told *Metal Exiles* in 2010.

"It is odd that in America some of these covers were a problem, because in the 80s when we would tour here, we always had boobs flashed to us at the front of the stage. Nowhere else in the world, just here. We just did not think it would be a problem to put out a record like *Lovedrive* in America."

Bow Wow Wow

SEE JUNGLE! SEE JUNGLE! GO JOIN YOUR GANG YEAH, CITY ALL OVER! GO APE CRAZY! **1981**

The most contentious album cover of the early 80s was also the most artistic. Managed by Malcolm McLaren, for Bow Wow Wow's debut album, and accompanying EP *The Last Of The Mohicans*, the plan was to recreate Édouard Manet's 1863 painting Le Déjeuner Sur l'Herbe. This involved 14-year-old lead singer Annabella Lwin posing naked. When her mother saw the finished album she went ballistic, instigating a Scotland Yard investigation into McLaren. But he knew the effect the outrage would have. "It had been down to No. 30 in the charts," photographer Andy Earl later recounted, "and it went straight back up to No. 1 because of the publicity that had gone round about the photograph." Eventually banned in the US, though not the UK, the image now hangs in the National Portrait Gallery.

Roger Waters

THE PROS AND CONS OF HITCH HIKING **1984**

For the release of his first solo album – which actually appeared the year before he left Pink Floyd – Roger Waters turned to *The Wall*'s animator Gerald Scarfe for art direction. Scarfe created the very Floyd-esque fonts, titles and backdrop, but the album ran into controversy for its foreground photo, of 80s glamour model and Penthouse editor Linzi Drew playing the part of the hitch-hiker. The final sleeve – notes Andy Mabbett in his book *Pink Floyd The Music And The Mystery* – "attracted complaints of sexism and was censored on some overseas releases". Indeed, as Darren Mevissen of RogerWaters.org remembers, "the album was to get some publicity, but not in the way Waters had wanted. The front cover picture of model Linzi Drew hitch-hiking naked was condemned by many feminist groups… It was considered sexist, with some claiming it even advertised rape. Many posters advertising it were ripped down and destroyed by protesters." Sure enough, the US and Japanese editions of the album added a black box over the offending buttocks.

The The

INFECTED **1986**

With the release of what many consider to be their magnum opus, *Infected*, The The were no strangers to controversy. The album's accompanying full-length video edition had already earned an 18 certificate and a risqué late-night première on Channel 4. With the release of the title track as a single, Matt Johnson's late brother Andrew excelled himself with another of the striking paintings the group had become synonymous with. But there was just one thing: the painting, this time, was of the devil masturbating. Why? We may find out more when Matt publishes a long-awaited The The biography later this year. What's even more surprising than the design is that Epic Records actually pressed some up, before having a crisis of confidence, recalling and destroying the covers, and reprinting them with the same image zoomed in on the devil's face.

Bon Jovi

SLIPPERY WHEN WET **1986**

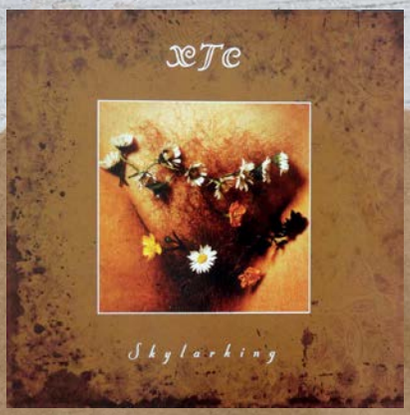
Originally titled *Wanted Dead Or Alive*, Bon Jovi's third studio album was set to have a suitably cowboy-configured cover. But, legend has it, the band visited The No. 5 Orange strip club in Vancouver and had their appetites whetted for one of the club's pole dancers. So the album title was changed and a busty close-up chosen as the cover shot. But Mercury Records knew the band were on the brink of the big time and wanted to avoid both a possible retail block and a sexism backlash. So the cover was changed at the last minute to, of all things, a black plastic bin liner. Jon Bon Jovi's official line was that it was changed because he'd hated the pink border around the original photo.The original cover art was still used for the Japanese edition.

Frankie Goes To Hollywood

WELCOME TO THE PLEASUREDOME **1984**

It wasn't the front cover of The Frankies' debut album that caused controversy, but rather the rear. Graphic artist Lo Cole had designed an elaborate montage of copulating creatures and amorous monsters. But he'd gone into too much detail and, when UK shops saw the proposed design, they immediately refused to stock it. So Lo went back to the drawing board and added green fig leaves over each set of monster genitals. "It was my suggestion to cover the offending details with fig leaves, which were drawn onto an overlay with an instruction to print in green," he later told the ArtofZTT.com blog.

The unexpurgated picture was finally shown on the rear of the 25th Anniversary reissue and included as a print in the 30th Anniversary boxset, *Inside The Pleasuredome*.



XTC

SKYLARKING **1986**

The cover's familiar hand-drawn image of two entwined lovers looks nothing like what XTC's Andy Partridge originally planned. "The initial sleeve opened at the top: there were then two fronts, or two backs," Andy explained to Christian Fevret for the French music magazine *Les Inrockuptibles* in 1992. "On one side, pubic hairs of a woman photographed very closely, with meadow flowers tangled, on the other one, pubic hairs of a man with flowers tangled. You then could choose the side you wanted to see. But we had problems with our record company and the record shops. Yet, one could see almost nothing, all was in the imagination. I found that it nicely summarised the time, the place and the feeling of the album, and there was a *Lady Chatterley's Lover* side, mischievous outdoor sex." Though rejected completely by Virgin Records when first submitted, Andy managed to revert to his original vision for the recent reissue of the album on his own Ape House imprint.

The Beautiful South

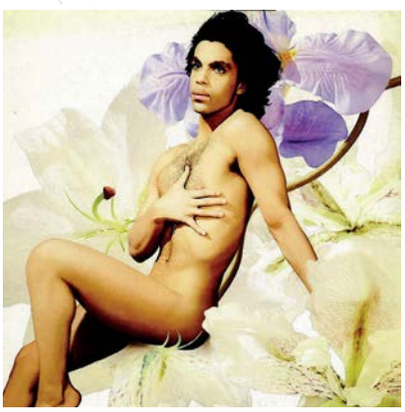
WELCOME TO THE BEAUTIFUL SOUTH **1989**

You might see the work of Czech photographer and painter Jan Saudek on the covers of records by Soul Asylum and Daniel Lanois, but you won't often see his photos on the cover of The Beautiful South's debut. For as soon as Woolworths saw it, they refused to stock it. The sleeve was reworked and, while the design stayed the same, Saudek's photos of a woman with a gun in her mouth and a man smoking were replaced. One with a teddy bear, the other with a toy bunny. "This sleeve was banned by Woolworths," the group explained on their website, "to prevent the hoards of impressionable young fans from blowing their heads off in a gun-gobbling frenzy, or taking up smoking." Saudek's photo of a topless woman brandishing a knife on the sleeve of Daniel Lanois' 1993 LP *For The Beauty Of Wynona* had the words 'American Edition' strategically placed to avoid offence to US buyers.

Guns N' Roses

APPETITE FOR DESTRUCTION **1987**

"A symbolic social statement, with the robot representing the industrial system that's raping and polluting our environment". That was how Guns N' Roses described the initial front cover of their debut album to the *LA Times* on its release in 1987. But it wasn't long before US stores took one look and refused to stock it. This forced Geffen Records to move the painting to the inner sleeve and replace it with a Celtic cross showing the skulls of the band members. The group had taken the name of the album from the painter of the original sleeve, too, who knew it was all destined for controversy. "When G N' R wanted to use my picture," artist Robert Williams told *SPIN* magazine in 1999, "I told Axl he was going to get into trouble. They asked if they could use the title of the painting. I said yes, but I knew there'd be a problem. None of the guys in this band were too articulate, so they would direct the media to me to defend the cover."



Prince

LOVESEXY **1988**

Jean-Baptiste Mondino's nude shot became one of the most recognisable record covers of the late 80s, despite being banned in half of the USA for showing too much flesh. Prince had taken the photographer on tour with him, and asked him to come up with an image for the front cover on the spot. Under a tight deadline, Mondino sketched out something you might expect to see in the Sistine Chapel. Prince approved, the photoshoot took place, and he then retouched an array of different variations for the artist to choose from. "In the end, Prince destroyed everything, and he said to me, 'I think what you did with the flowers was best'," Mondino recounted in last year's book *Total Records: Photography And The Art Of The Album Cover*. "The cover came out and got banned in quite a few states. It's a religious image par excellence."

Millie Jackson

BACK TO THE SHIT **1989**

From The Mamas & The Papas' *If You Can Believe Your Eyes* and Ears to The Rolling Stones' *Beggars Banquet* to this, the final part in the unholy trinity of banned toilet covers. With tracks such as *Hot! Wild! Unrestricted! Crazy Love* and, we kid you not, *Muffle That Fart*, this 1989 live album was outrageous in every way. Millie looks pretty strained on the front cover, so you'll be pleased to know that, on the rear, she looks much happier with things. But, to quote *Ebony* magazine, "Friends don't let friends take photographs of them taking a dump. Ever." Suffice to say, record retailers in the USA refused to stock this cover, something which the singer had narrowly avoided with the 1983 release *E.S.P. (Extra Sexual Persuasion)* with its cleavage-enhancing crystal ball. It was left to Naomi Campbell to add another chapter to the annals of toilet covers, with the release of 1994's (some would say criminally overlooked) *Baby Woman*. Though for that cover, Naomi is only shaving her legs while sitting on the loo. ▶

Blur

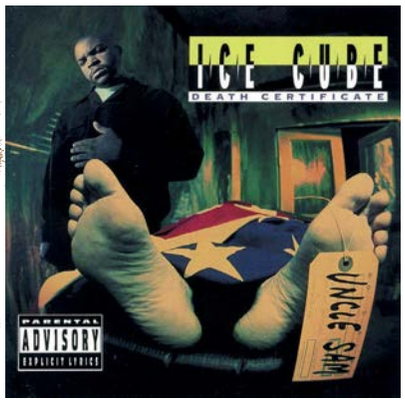
SHE'S SO HIGH **1990**

Towards the end of 1990, Blur released their debut single, the AA-side of *She's So High* and *I Know*. It didn't dent the charts, but the artwork caused a stir. Designed by Mel Ramos, the design was of a naked woman riding a hippopotamus. Although used in a small, repetitive way on the cover art, on the poster (and T-shirt) the image was printed more prominently and led to a ban on the poster in the London borough of Hackney and at London Underground stations. Mel Ramos' credit on the 7" sleeve was for 'high art', but it didn't go down well with students, who accused the group of sexism. They got the students back onside pretty quickly, though – its follow-up, *There's No Other Way*, dispensed with any contentious artwork, reached No. 8 on the singles chart and the rest is indie history.

Jane's Addiction

RITUAL DE LO HABITUAL **1990**

Released in the summer of 1990, Jane's Addiction's second album came in a sleeve by the group's singer Perry Farrell based on their song *Three Days* and depicting some male and female nudity. The image "immediately became the subject of controversy by conservative political groups in the United States", the band's official discography explains. "In Royal Oak, MI, the very same day this album was released, owners of Off The Record were arrested and charged with 'distributing obscene material' for displaying promotional posters of the album, featuring the cover the band intended to be released, in his record store." The charges were dropped, but the group were forced to come up with a replacement cover. They replaced the artwork with the group's name, album title and song titles in black on a plain white background. And, beneath it, the text of the First Amendment.



Ice Cube

DEATH CERTIFICATE **1991**

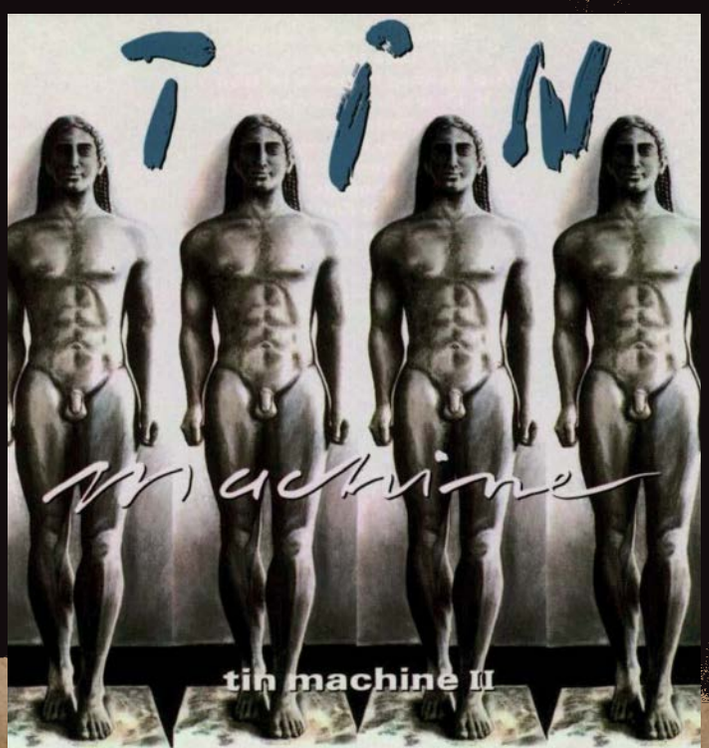
With NWA, Ice Cube was no stranger to controversy. And his debut solo album continued the tradition, not only with the music and lyrics but with the cover artwork. It might have been only mildly shocking to picture Ice Cube in a mortuary, looking mournfully at a corpse. But it was very shocking to see the name tag on the corpse's toe: Uncle Sam. This – combined with the lyrics (two songs were completely removed from the original UK edition) – led to bans all over the world for the album. In Oregon, it reached fever pitch: the state declared it illegal to display not only the album cover but any image of Ice Cube himself in retail stores. They also banned ads for the Cube-endorsed St. Ides Malt Liquor. The controversy did nothing to halt critical acclaim for Ice Cube's debut as a solo artist, though, and by 2005, *Death Certificate* charted eighth in the Greatest Hip-Hop Albums Of All Time.

Tin Machine

TIN MACHINE II **1991**

It's funny to think that *Tin Machine II* appeared only 17 years after *Diamond Dogs*. In those intervening years, the music world had moved on 10 times over, and Bowie himself was in a completely different place. And while this second Tin Machine album was met with far less expectation and excitement than *…Dogs*, it did manage to cause just as much of a stir with its artwork. Once again, all the fuss was over genitals on display, though this time on male statues, as opposed to a morphed Bowie/dog. The statues themselves were kouroi, the Ancient Greek emblems of noble, youthful young men. The kouroi's genitals had to be airbrushed out before the LP could go on sale, but only in the USA.

"Even Canada has the original cover," Bowie told *The Seattle Times* when the album was released, "Only in America…" He hatched an idea that US album buyers could send away for the missing genitals, which they could then stick back onto their covers. But, perhaps unsurprisingly, the record company would not cooperate.



Green Day

KERPLUNK **1992**

The second studio album by Green Day looks innocent enough. And very 90s, in a *Tank Girl* sort of way. That's thanks to the drawing of a woman with a smoking gun on the front cover by Pat Hynes. The trouble came when you turned the record over and saw the girl's victim lying on the ground. That was enough for both Walmart and Kmart in the US to refuse to stock the LP. And they ran into trouble for the album's follow-up, 1994's *Dookie*, too. The artist Richie Bucher painted a scene that freaked out both the supermarkets once again, with its images of bombs dropping and buildings exploding. It does have some nice detail in it, but the group also received threats of litigation from the creators of *Sesame Street* – for using the image of Ernie on the back cover.

Ice-T

HOME INVASION **1993**

Another controversial classic from the pique of early-90s hip-hop. This one caused even more uproar than Ice Cube's. It was Ice-T's fifth studio album and, for the artwork, he turned to the artist who had delivered the front cover of his *Body Count* album project the year before, which became notorious for the track *Cop Killer*. The final cover image of *Home Invasion* is a montage, and there's a lot going on. While various books and website have tried to sum up the painting in one line, that would be to do it a disservice and pigeonhole it as making just one political point. Either way, the images it contained – based around violence against women and interracial violence – were enough to stop the release of the album dead in its tracks. Sire Records' owner, Time Warner, is said to have refused to release the album point-blank. Ice T initially opted to go down the Prince route – renaming it *The Black Album* and issuing it in a plain black cover – but that never happened and he left the label, taking *Home Invasion* with him.

The Black Crowes

AMORICA **1994**

It's strange to think that a photo used on the cover of a magazine in 1976 could then be banned when used on the cover of an album almost 20 years later. But that's what happened to The Black Crowes with third album, *Amorica*. The photo came from the front cover of *Hustler* magazine's Super Bicentennial Edition of July 1976, which celebrated America with a close-up of a stars-and-stripes-emblazoned thong, complete with pubic hair poking out of the top. The Black Crowes used the same image as their front cover, but it was banned immediately in the USA from 'big box' retailers such as Walmart and Kmart. Some major airbrushing then took place, adding a black background and border so all that could be seen was the flag-like thong. The retailers took the album back and *Amorica* went on to go gold, selling more than half-a-million copies.

Pet Shop Boys

BEFORE **1996**

The first single from Pet Shop Boys' 1996 album *Bilingual*, and effecively the warm-up for their smash hit *Se A Vida É (That's The Way Life Is)*. The final artwork used some rather boring black and white photos by Brad Branson of Neil Tennant on one side and Chris Lowe on the other. But that wasn't the initial plan. Two different 12" promo editions (one tinted blue, the other red) caused a furore with their close-up photo of a man's flaccid penis, the owner of which remains a mystery. There's another sleeve that complements this one, too. "It's worth noting that the sleeve art of an extremely rare 12" vinyl promo of *The Truck Driver And His Mate* takes the notorious 'penis graphic' of *Before* and doubles it," reports PSB archivist Wayne Studer, "thereby representing the two men of the title. Reportedly only 150 copies were pressed…it ranks among the most sought-after PSB collectibles and has been known to fetch prices well into the triple digits."

Marilyn Manson

MECHANICAL ANIMALS **1998**

From genitals on display to genitals airbrushed out. Either way, focusing on the nether regions will cause controversy. So, once again, it was the 'big box' stores in the US that took exception to the cover of the third studio album by Marilyn Manson and refused to stock it. That said, although the nether regions had been airbrushed out, extra fingers had been added to his hands, as well as fake breasts, all of which were under a full-figure latex suit, to create a unique vision. Designer Paul Brown told Barry Miles in 2005 book *The Greatest Album Covers of All Time*, "I'm extremely proud of it. I said more in one of his covers than any novel could. It made people think and cringe." But Manson had originally intended to go further still: discussions were had over 'implanting' a set of six breasts complete with nipples, as he portrayed the character on the cover.

00s THE 2000s

The Strokes

IS THIS IT **2001**

When The Strokes' debut album appeared in the UK, both HMV and Woolworths complained about the buttock image on the front cover, but went ahead and stocked it out of view of passing customers.

In the US, retailers were not so open-minded and the photo – by Colin Lane – was banned and had to be completely replaced, with the group opting for a psychedelic visualisation of a subatomic particle. As for the original photo? "I walked out of the shower and I was completely naked," the model told the *Goldenfiddle* blog in 2008. "I was walking around the house – he was like, 'Put this glove on'. I walked over, boom, that was the shot." In *The Greatest Album Covers Of All Time*, writer Grant Scott was unable to make his mind up as to the merits of the image. "It's either a stylish or graphically strong cover," he said, "or a sexist *Smell The Glove* travesty."

Arctic Monkeys

WHATEVER PEOPLE SAY I AM, THAT'S WHAT I'M NOT **2006**

The cover of Arctic Monkeys' debut album wasn't banned but it certainly caused a lot of controversy, especially for such a successful record: it's now reached quintuple platinum status and is the fastest-selling debut album by a band in UK music history. So, with such a widespread image, the fact that the cover featured a friend of the band, Chris McClure, smoking a cigarette was always going to cause trouble. Dr Laurence Gruer of NHS Health Scotland was one of the most vocal opponents. He spoke to the *Scottish Herald* to say the cover "reinforces the idea that smoking is okay… It gives out the wrong image. With a blatant image of a guy smoking, it will be seen by many as a cool thing to do." But the group were having none of it. "You can see from the image smoking is not doing him the world of good," their label retorted. "The image has been used all over the place… we have not had any complaints."

SUBTLY SUBVERSIVE…

It was Spotify's rather uninspired cover art for their playlists that started us off on this quest to find the most shocking record sleeves of all time. And we've since noticed that Spotify will censor even the most subtly subversive cover art. Take Red Hot Chili Peppers' classic *By The Way*, for example. The cover is a painting by Julian Schnabel of his daughter, Stella. She's topless, standing on a palm tree, as you might remember from when the LP came out in 2002. But on Spotify in 2017, someone's painted over Stella's nipples.

Manic Street Preachers

JOURNAL FOR PLAGUE LOVERS **2009**

For the cover of their 2005 album *The Holy Bible*, Manic Street Preachers chose an image – Strategy (South Face/Front Face/North Face) – by contemporary British painter Jenny Saville. And while that didn't generate too much controversy, their use of Saville's 2005 painting Stare for the cover of *Journal For Plague Lovers* did not sit well with UK supermarkets at all. The red paint used for the boy's face was deemed to look to close to blood, with Sainsbury's deeming it 'inappropriate' for sale. Tesco and Asda followed suit and the Manics' label was forced to provide a plain wrapper to go around the original sleeve, as opposed to reworking the artwork completely. "It is bizarre that supermarkets actually think that it's going to impinge on anyone's psyche," James Dean Bradfield told BBC 6 Music at the time. "We just thought it was a beautiful painting… If you're familiar with Saville's work, there's a lot of ochres and browns and reds… Perhaps people are looking for us to be more provocative than we are being."

Crystal Castles

ALICE PRACTICE **2008**

Crystal Castles' debut EP may have been limited to a run of only 500 7" vinyl editions, but the cover image – a drawing of Madonna with a black eye – proved so popular that it became a fashionable late-Noughties T-shirt and the band's unofficial logo. But things were never going to run smoothly, and while you might have expected the first objection to come from Madonna, it actually came from the artist Trevor Brown, as he had never been paid for the use of his drawing. After several heated exchanges online, both sides called a truce. "It took us a while to build up our collection of pennies," blogged the Castles' Ethan Kath at the time, "but we finally saved enough money to pay the man who drew the image, which we have adopted as our logo." Brown was in agreement, though a little ominous in his announcement. "The black-eyed Madonna is now officially and legally theirs," he said, "to do with as they please… At least until Maddy herself files a lawsuit!"

THE 2010s

Kanye West

MY BEAUTIFUL DARK TWISTED FANTASY **2010**

The first contentious cover of the current decade was recorded in what Kanye described as "self-imposed exile" in Hawaii and featured an array of special guests including Bon Iver, Jay Z, Nicki Minaj and John Legend. For the sleeve, his long-term collaborator George Condo painted an image of the singer "being straddled", as MTV put it, "on a couch by a naked, armless, winged woman with a polka-dot tail". Of all the objections over cover art in our virtual gallery, this was the first whose ban was announced on Twitter.

Bat For Lashes

THE HAUNTED MAN **2012**

Not for the first time in our exhibition, the influence of Patti Smith and *Horses* rears its head. "Natasha Khan, also known as Bat For Lashes, has posed naked with a nude man thrown over her shoulder on the cover of her new album," *Metro* excitedly announced back in July 2012, explaining the shot as her way of honouring raw women like Patti Smith.

"On the one hand, *The Haunted Man*'s cover is terrific," Kitty Empire wrote in *the Guardian*. "The mighty huntress Diana has nailed a large kill. On the other, Khan's still naked – how the media prefers to market its women. The best thing about it is her expression, neither triumphant nor cutesy, just captured herself in the act of capture."

Beady Eye

BE **2013**

While Natasha Khan created a cover that took the artform forwards, a year later, Beady Eye's second album sleeve was banned for its gauche 70s imagery. The photo was taken by Harry Peccinotti, who had shot Pirelli calendars in the late 60s, and centred on his wife lying back topless, nipple on display. "It's sexy, it's a nipple you can bring home to your mother," Liam Gallagher told *NME*. "It's not porn, is it? It's classic, man. Classic nipple." Not only did supermarkets request that a sticker covered the boob, so did – and this is another first for this decade – online retailers.

Sky Ferreira

NIGHT TIME, MY TIME **2013**

In what looks like a remake of the shower scene from Hitchcock's *Psycho*, Sky Ferreira appeared topless on the cover of her debut album *Night Time, My Time*. Though not for long – digital services cropped it to remove the lower section of the photo. And when it appeared in stores, a sticker had been added with the artist's name and title. Both were the work of Capitol Records who, almost 50 years after … *Two Virgins*, could still not sanction the image of a female nipple on a record cover. The image was shot by film director Gaspar Noé, whose other music credits include videos for Nick Cave And The Bad Seeds and Placebo. "It probably says more about how female artists are treated in the pop world," said *SPIN* magazine as they unveiled the uncensored cover, "than it does about Sky Ferreira to point out that her extra-musical activities constantly threaten to overshadow her often-impressive music."

Lady Gaga

ARTPOP **2013**

While the symmetry of …*Two Virgins* to Sky Ferreira shows that, in some ways, nothing has changed in the story of controversial cover art over the last 50 years, Gaga's *Artpop* starts a whole new chapter. Prior to the release of her third album, the artist had been banned outright in China. But Interscope Records pulled out all the stops – and censored where they needed to – to get the singer's album into the world's fastest-growing music market. They increased the size of the giant orb between Gaga's legs to cover all of her naked, though covered, upper body. They then Photoshopped a pair of black tights over her legs. But was she upset by these dramatic changes to her art? Not at all. Censorship – for this performer, in the 2010s – was the way to break into a whole new audience. "I'm so excited!" she tweeted, "The Chinese Government approved *Artpop* to be released in China with all 15 songs! Next, I hope I can come to perform!" ●

South-East London

Mark Elliott continues his intrepid (and costly) adventures in record collecting. This issue, he's visiting the record shops in his own back yard…

Less a Trip this time; more a window into my shopping compulsion – these stores are the reason why my bank balance largely resembles a bath full of water with a leaky plug. The gentrification of the capital's Zone 1 has pushed the momentum of record retailing further into the suburbs and, being a Greenwich resident, these booming south-east London stores are all within easy striking distance. Their owners tell me that more central dealers are making trips to them to top up stock, as a way of keeping their own units alive, with turnover under pressure from limited parking. Not a problem here, but traffic can be terrible.

Across the years I've been buying, I've concluded you find a bit of everything in almost every corner of the country, but soul, R&B and dance discs are in abundance in my part of the world. Yet it's far from the whole story, and there really is something for everyone. Transport-wise, the further out you are, the more limited the train routes. There's no Tube to speak of in this part of the city and, while plentiful, the buses can be a bit daunting for anyone not up to speed on the distinction between Gypsy or Shooters Hills. So driving is your best bet for this circuit, with most stores close to free or more modestly priced parking than a trip to the West End (Greenwich town centre aside, where parking can be very expensive).

The gentrification of the capital's Zone 1 has pushed the momentum of record retailing further into the suburbs

I avoided the crush of a Saturday for a change and picked a Friday, where I found business was still very brisk. The traffic challenged my itinerary and, in truth, there's enough here to keep you busy across a couple of days if you choose to dig deeply.

Illustration Ben Talon

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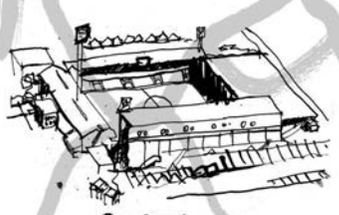
CRYSTAL PALACE PARK

2 3



SELHURST PARK

1

1 ROLLIN RECORDS
6 Station Road, West Wickham, BR4 0PR
rollinrecordsuk.com
Opening hours
10am to 5.30pm Thursday to Saturday

2 WANTED MUSIC
415 Croydon Road, BR3 3PP
Opening hours
Noon to 6pm Monday; 10.30am to 6pm Tuesday and Wednesday; 10am to 6pm Thursday and Friday; 10am to 5.30pm Saturday

3 RAVEN
74 Bromley Road, BR3 5NP
Opening hours
11am to 5pm Monday to Saturday

4 TURNSTYLE RECORDS
227 Streatham High Road, SW16 6EN
Turnstylerecords.wazala.com
Opening hours
11am to 6pm Monday; 10.30am to 6pm Wednesday to Sunday

5 THE BOOK AND RECORD BAR
20 Norwood High Street, SE27 9NR
bookandrecordbar.co.uk
Opening hours
10.30am to 6pm Tuesday to Sunday

6 COLLECTION
70 Lee High Road, SE13 5PT
Opening hours
11.30am to 4.30pm Monday to Saturday

7 CRUISIN RECORDS
132 Welling High Street, DA16 1TJ
Opening hours
9am to 5.30pm Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday; 10am to 6pm Tuesday and Thursday

8 CASBAH RECORDS
320-322 Creek Road, SE10 9SW
casbahrecords.co.uk
Opening hours
11.30am to 6pm Monday; 10.30am to 6pm Tuesday to Friday; 10.30am to 6.30pm Saturday and Sunday

9 MUSIC & VIDEO EXCHANGE
23 Greenwich Church Street, SE10 9BJ
Mgeshops.com/music-video-exchange-23gcs
Opening hours
10am to 8pm Monday to Sunday

10 CLASSICAL BARGAIN RECORDS
3 Station Approach, SE9 2AB
Opening hours
10am to 5pm Friday;
8.30am to 5pm Saturday

1 ROLLIN RECORDS

If there is a magic formula to balance volume of stock with meticulous filing, this store hits that sweet spot. Boxes of beautifully curated singles make sourcing something specific so simple. For example, my eyes are drawn quickly to a couple of crates of TV-related 7" singles and… what a revelation! It's a genre I'm particularly fond of, but there are records in here I never knew existed. Among my finds are actress Pauline Collins' bawdy music-hall rendition of the *Upstairs, Downstairs* score, billed *What Are We Going To Do With Uncle Arthur?* released on Decca in 1973 and featured in the series; Ron Grainer's haunting *Tales Of The Unexpected* theme and the tune that signaled the start of my teenage BBC soap addiction – *Angels*. Prices are very fair for my haul (and I get a discount). In truth, there's enough vinyl here to keep you busy all day, but Steve and Kim Willis, who have run the shop for 14 years, stress part of the key to Rollin's success is to keep things moving super-fast. "The whole record collectors' market has moved on from the obsession with the rare. We now need to make sure that more common stuff, in decent condition, is readily available," says Steve. "There's probably still not much of a market for poor old Bing Crosby or Jim Reeves, but sound copies of *Rumours* always shift fast. That's good. People's pet hate is seeing the same stock over and over again." Rollin doesn't carry much contemporary R&B, for example, but pretty much every other genre up to the 1990s is here in large quantities (including a good range of very cheap 80s soul). Steve and Kim don't trade online and their strategy to maintain focus on a steady supply of new stock appears to be doing very well, with my wad of cash (they don't currently take cards) soon paying testament…

2 WANTED MUSIC

In the 12 years that Adriaan Neervoort has been running Wanted Music from its current home in Beckenham, he agrees with his nearby neighbours at Rollin that the supply of new stock is crucial, as interest in the sector has picked up. A record-store veteran – he used to run the legendary Beanos in Croydon – Adriaan chose this location because it afforded him the space to offer customers the stuff they might not even realise they wanted. "Be it exotica, Smurf vocal releases or railway records – I try to carry it all," he tells me. "Recently, I took a collection of LaserDiscs and I know they won't shift quickly, but that's the joy of it! One day, a customer will come in, see them and they'll be gone." Adriaan believes vinyl buyers like not knowing what they want. "Online is a great research tool, but nothing beats the art of discovery," he says. "It's called retail therapy for a reason!" Alongside a copy of The Adventures' 1990 LP *Trading Secrets With The Moon* and a very fine copy of the West Germany-issued 12" maxi of *The Winner Takes It All* by ABBA, I embrace that moment of discovery Adriaan talks about. Also, I didn't know Sony commissioned a 1997 Todd Terry remix of *Everything She Wants* by Wham!. This 12" leaves me as excited as if I'd unearthed the Cheapside Hoard. And perhaps I have… certainly the remix treatment is a winner. There's plenty more to rifle through, including choice collectables and dance and R&B covering releases right up to today.

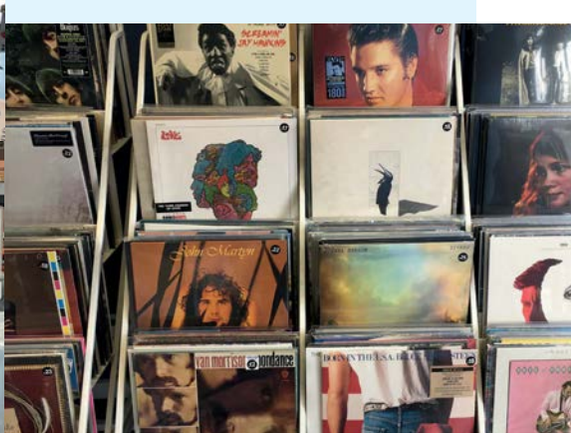
> ***"Be it exotica, Smurf vocal releases or railway records – I try to carry it all"***

3 RAVEN

This respected punk, rock and alternative specialist is perched on the edge of Beckenham and carries a decent amount of vinyl, including releases from Record Store Day. Opening hours can be patchy, but you're generally in luck on a Saturday. In truth, there's little here that's my bag, but if this is your kind of stuff, keep an eye on Raven's social-media platforms, as there are occasional PAs here and a good merchandise range – if a T-shirt featuring The Damned is the sort of sartorial statement you want to make. Now, if it were Bananarama we might be talking…

4 TURNSTYLE RECORDS

The centrepiece of this two-year-old store on Streatham High Road is an old Crystal Palace FC turnstyle – testament to owner Chris Winter's other great love. It's a physical reminder that passion has to underpin anything worth doing in life, and his affection for vinyl is certainly why this shop is already so highly rated. With a reputation for jazz – Turnstyle is one of the capital's best – I find a much wider selection than expected, along with some nicely presented merchandise and gorgeous repro record players. Now branching out to host in-store gigs (Morgan Heritage were due in-store the following week) and helping curate festivals, it's a store with quite a following, as a check on its social media later testifies. Stock is balanced evenly between new and used, and I pick out a nice pressing of the *Record Mirror Private Pleasures* compilation from 1978. *Record Mirror* was my bible back in the day, and my music appetite was never quite sated after it folded in 1991. This LP, which was 'free to readers', features – among others – the little remembered City Boy, Godley & Creme and a new band called Dire Straits. I wonder what happened to them…



Top five

1 LONG LONG WAY TO GO
All these shops are comfortably outside the central Congestion Charge zone, but you will find driving across the area tricky during peak traffic times. A trip from Welling, where you'll find Cruisin, to Streatham's Turnstyle Records will take you over an hour, so plan your route carefully.

2 ONE MORE BITE
A number of the stores are situated slightly outside interesting retail hubs, although the two Greenwich stores are very close to the attractions, the famous market (where you'll also find a handful of stalls selling vinyl) and an abundance of places to eat or grab a drink.

3 NO TICKET REQUIRED
If you are buying a Travelcard to brave the public transport, the Zones 1 to 6 option will cover the areas you need to get to (although West Wickham is your most distant spot and situated in Zone 5). Getting an Oyster Card (for a £5 non-refundable fee) might work out cheaper, as you pay only for the journeys you make.

4 *SUSSUDIO* IS ACTUALLY A GREAT SONG, MARK
Cash remains king in the majority of the stores, although Rollin was just about to install a new device at the time of writing. Everyone I spoke to buys records but, as ever, most are picky about what they'll take. Music & Video Exchange has a famous policy of buying anything legal, but that won't mean your retirement fund will likely be generated from a fair-to-middling copy of *No Jacket Required*.

5 TAKE ME HOME
There are so many record shops in London and so many ways to segment them, you could create your own Trip that ticks off other venues that we'll cover in a future feature. Vinyl Deptford or Rye Wax in Peckham could also easily be paired with the stores in Lewisham and Streatham. Then again, how do you tick off Brixton?…

5 THE BOOK AND RECORD BAR

Michael Johnson has transformed this neglected old pub into a community beacon that plays host to open-deck nights and gigs, and is the home of an online radio station alongside a daytime store. It's a remarkable regeneration for a beautiful building that the central racks of records, neatly showcased on portable stands, help to support. Michael is a former collector and when – as happens to us all – the space started to run out, he began to think about how to turn his hobby into a full-time occupation. When he found the 140-year-old pub, which closed its doors in 2007, its reputation was poor and the site soon became abandoned and uninhabitable. Now respectfully restored, the building is maintained by his business model, that's balanced between selling vinyl and books and the programming, which he admits makes a big contribution to the month's takings. Michael says he's mindful not to overstock, so everything here is carefully curated and there's a decent range of new releases and reissues alongside the second-hand discs. There's not a lot of obvious commercial material, but the rare and interesting make this a rewarding trawl. This man is also clearly a Timelord, as The Book & Record Bar has a TARDIS-like knack of surprising you with just one more intriguing shelf you can't imagine how there's space for. I pick up a couple of early-90s Prince albums at a very keen price and the second Buggles set, *Adventures In Modern Recording*.

The Book & Record Bar has a knack of surprising you with just one more intriguing shelf

6 COLLECTION

The drift towards a more boutique style of record hunting has left many a crate digger bemoaning the slick, sterile new order of shopping. Well, Collection is going to be right up their street. Here, there's a bewildering disinterest in labelling and a stack of Big Country duplicates leads you straight into Jamelia 12" promos and then back to Olivia Newton-John's debut LP. A voyage of discovery, for sure, but somehow kind of thrilling – and there's rather a lot to wade through, including some rarities.

Most of the displays look as if they were conceived when the Backstreet Boys topped our charts; but maybe you want it that way, and don't assume that the dust is a signal of disinterest – there's plenty of help on hand if you ask for it. Prices are fair and I find a particularly interesting soundtracks section. Rupert Everett's 1987 film *Chronicle Of A Death Foretold* is staggeringly still unissued on DVD, and I no longer have a player to run my prized VHS. The mint soundtrack I source here is a very welcome part-reconciliation and, as the reviews will testify, the Piero Piccioni score was about the only thing the critics got excited about. They perhaps didn't appreciate Rupert in the same way I did back in the day.

7 CRUISIN

Running for more than 30 years, this Welling independent is another store that embraces Record Store Day in a big way. The vinyl is towards the back of the shop, so don't be put off by the CDs and DVDs that dominate its entrance. The counter provides my favourite two finds of the entire Trip – the recent RSD editions of a 7" picture disc issue of Prince's *Little Red Corvette* and *1999* and the score for *Quatermass And The Pit*. Further out back, you'll find a lot of second-hand and new vinyl, with a bias towards dance and soul, but a lot more besides. Prices are very keen and there are some good bargains to be had here. I collect Stock Aitken Waterman in a big way and pick up the Funky Sisters Remix of Princess's *Say I'm Your Number One* for £1. Why I've never bothered to buy this online is unclear, but isn't that the eternal dilemma for collectors? The simple short-cut that sterilises the whole experience or the thrill of the chase? I hope we're all still firmly enslaved to the second camp, but I know we're all pretty likely to have strayed onto the dark side on occasions. The key is not to make a habit of it!

Further out back, you'll find a lot of second-hand and new vinyl, with a bias towards dance and soul

8 CASBAH RECORDS

This highly respected London gem has recently expanded to take over the vintage clothing store that it shared the tenancy with and now, finally, there's room to see everything. The piles of vinyl that had been stacked on the floor are berthed in new racks and the wider range of memorabilia – including an impressive stock of 1970s music weeklies – looks stunning. New vinyl jostles with a decent range of the old stuff, and prices are reasonable. This lovely shop, which started life as a stall in the nearby market, also takes Record Store Day very seriously and, this year, the queues started scarily early with the line forming the night before for the first time. I'm often among them but, this year, a family get-together meant I missed the whole thing.

Lucky for me, like elsewhere, there was a decent haul still on sale a few days later and I picked up a vinyl reissue of the *Doctor Who And The Pescatons* LP packaged with the *Sound Effects* album for a fraction of what I would have paid to secure it online. I'm heartened to see so much stock still on sale a couple of weeks after the RSD event, yet all retailers were telling me attendances in 2017 were better than ever. It bodes well for this sometimes-maligned initiative.

9 MUSIC & VIDEO EXCHANGE

This eastern outpost of the London retail legend is, to my mind, among the capital's best. Across two floors, it carries a staggering range of second-hand records with most genres getting a respectable showing. So many of my treasured finds have been unearthed here – mint copies of early *Now That's What I Call Music!* compilations, rare Kylie remixes and more picture discs than I could ever hope to have wall space for. With the Soho store still shut – although due to reopen in 2017, I'm told – stock is moved between the site here and the branches in Notting Hill, meaning there's a high turnover and I'm rarely disappointed on my frequent visits. The basement is where you'll bag a bargain, while the ground floor carries the more collectable stock. One interesting find on this trip is a three-LP set of the late DJ Casey Kasem's syndicated radio show of the American Top 40. Included in this near-mint copy from 1985 are the typed and photocopied sheets of commentary. How this ended up in Greenwich in 2017 is worthy of a feature in its own right. How did anyone escape punishment for dressing up kids as Mini-Pops as well as releasing a *Rocket To The Stars* album? The shrill treatment of *Shattered Dreams* is eyewatering (but you're right; I did have to buy it to find that out).

The Trip

Getting there

Public transport is of course abundant in London, but lines typically radiate outwards from the centre of the city and heading round on an orbital route can be tough going. The bus network will link you up eventually, but requires careful planning. The Greenwich shops are almost opposite the DLR station, but pretty much everything else is some distance away from a public transport hub. Getting round by car is by far the easiest option, but you'll need to allow a full day to cover these stores in anywhere near the depth they merit. In truth, it might be best to pick two or three and stagger your visits.

10 CLASSICAL BARGAIN RECORDS

The name is not, in truth, a fair description of what you'll find, but this small shop, tucked away at the boundary of the Royal Borough of Greenwich, is handily just a stone's throw from New Eltham train station. Crates of records are stacked up out front, and you'll find plenty more inside. While there is a lot of classical stuff here – on CD and vinyl – there's a wider, faster-moving turnover of other stuff and this time I pick up a Vikki Carr LP in fabulous nick and a set of boyband A1's 12"s from the first couple of years of this century. It's indicative of the eclectic range that I find here on my regular visits. The store moved from its former home in nearby Eltham a few years back and still attracts a gang of regulars, who can often be spotted having a cup of tea on some battered old chairs dotted about the single-storey unit. It's that sort of heartening sight that speaks volumes about this crazy, sometimes rather solitary, addiction to crate digging we're all trapped in. As vices go, perhaps it's really not such a bad one… ●

AT HOME WITH SIMON TAFFE

A festival born from a record collection… that's exactly what End Of The Road Festival was and is. **Laura Williams** spends the morning listening to records with the festival's founder, Simon Taffe, in his North London flat

There aren't many kids lucky enough to be gifted a ready-made 2,000-strong record collection, but for a (then) CD-obsessed teenage Simon Taffe, that is what marked the start of his journey into the world of vinyl. It was the late 90s, when people were ditching their old records and replacing them with CDs. End Of The Road Festival founder Taffe went the other way.

"Dad's friend was basically moving away," he recalls. "He'd just bought everything on CD and didn't want that much stuff, so whittled his collection down. I got given about 2,000 records – there was loads of stuff in there that I liked, stuff I hadn't properly checked out. Like every single Bob Dylan record and every single Pink Floyd record. It was a pretty solid collection." Taffe's still in touch with his vinyl angel and says his friend sometimes borrows stuff back from him.

Recalling the point where his love affair with CDs began to dissipate and vinyl took pride of place on his shelves, he says: "One of my first records I bought was Neil Young's *On The Beach*, because I couldn't get it anywhere, and I paid £45 in Professor Plastic in Edinburgh; I saved up for it, then they released it on CD. I didn't want them ever to release it… it was my special find."

It wasn't until he fell for The White Stripes at the turn of the century that Taffe started seriously buying vinyl. "It was when you couldn't get stuff on CD, stuff that was 7" only," he recalls. "So I started buying loads of 7" singles. I got obsessed with The White Stripes. It was the first band that I became an obsessive collector of. I had to have everything. I had it all on CD, I had it all on vinyl, I had it on every format. My mum always said it's because my star sign is Cancer, we're collectors. It got really weird, but it got me into more 7"s, and from there, I've been buying them all the time.

"The great thing about vinyl is it forces you to listen to it all the way

Portraits Mike Prior
Festival photography Sonny Malhotra

through. Vinyl is still a believer in the album format, which is getting slowly lost, unfortunately.

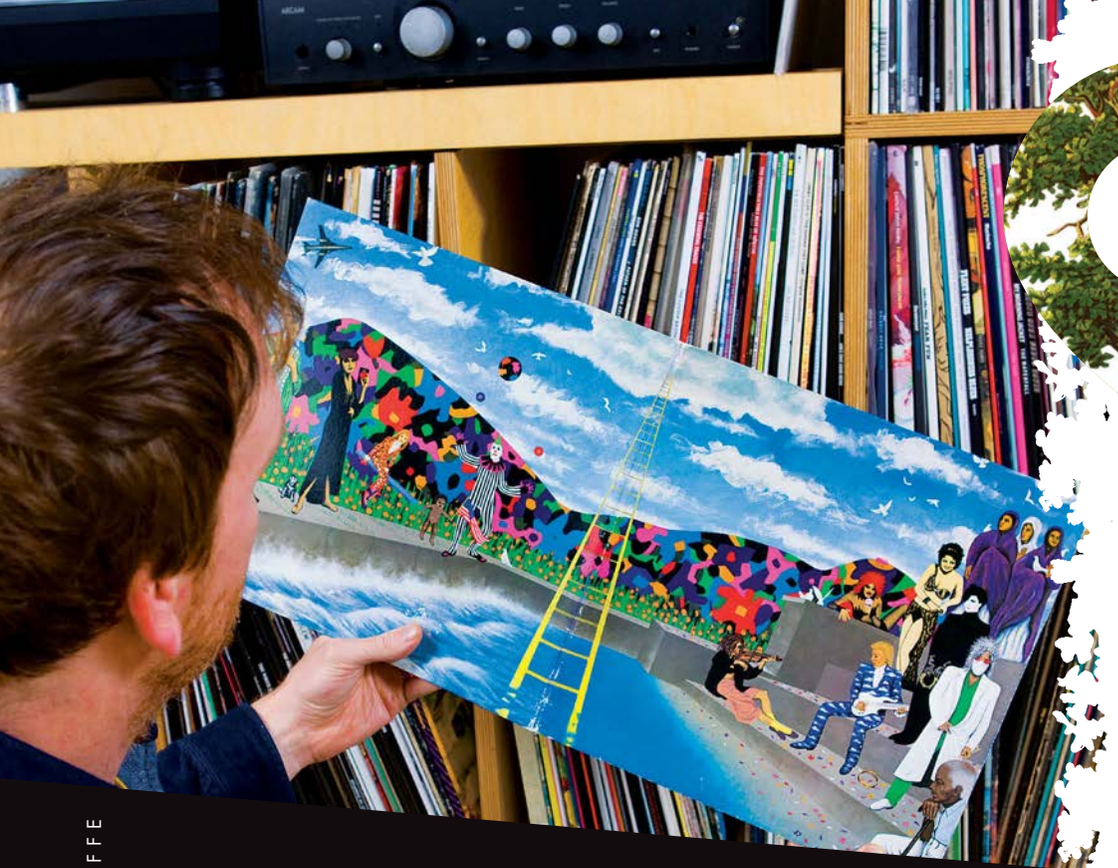
"In the 60s and 70s, your mates would say, 'Come round the pub,' and you'd say, 'Oh no, I've just got the new Neil Young record, I'm gonna stay in and listen to it'. That's what used to happen. That never happens now. We get so many ways of listening to music, that's been lost. It's so passive. And that's the great thing about vinyl, it puts you into the headspace of really listening to music – it forces you to listen to it."

WISHING ON A STAR

As he puts some Sibylle Baier on his record player, Taffe concedes how important the kit is: "At first, I never had the best stereo, it was all about the best collection, and then I thought, 'What am I doing? I've got all these great records and a not-so-great stereo.'"

He's now got a decent record player and visits record shops at least once a week. "I discovered Rough Trade in 2000 and used to come up every single week," he recalls. "I have to be in a record shop at least once a week, or I start feeling a bit weird. That's how I discover music, really, when I first went in and would buy new vinyl all the time – and I still do. Back then, I liked The Strokes and those sorts of bands, but I've always been into my alt-country, like Lambchop, Ryan Adams and Bill Callahan." The latter is playing End Of The Road festival this year, a coup for the festival organiser, who says: "Every year now, there are bands I've been chasing since 2006, like Bill Callahan."

His persistence has finally paid off, as it did with Sufjan Stevens in 2015. The US singer-songwriter is responsible for one of Taffe's most-played albums in recent years, *Carrie & Lowell*, and he's got a few more on his wishlist, including PJ Harvey and Bonnie Prince Billy. "I've been pushing for Bonnie Prince Billy for years," Taffe sighs. "He ▶



wrote me a handwritten letter, I dunno how he got my address, and basically, he said, 'I don't like festivals, but keep bugging me'. So you never know."

Taffe's relationship with Rough Trade and friendship with Nigel House, who helped set up the Rough Trade shops, proved instrumental in helping him set up his festival in those early days. "When you go into record shops, you find the person behind the counter who you have similar taste with – Nigel has really similar taste to me, country music, basically – so we built a whole relationship on that and he was recommending stuff. About four years after I started shopping at Rough Trade, I said, 'I'm gonna start up this festival', and he started helping me out, because I had no contacts in the industry. He would give me an email for Nick Cave's people: I didn't even know what booking agents were. He'd just write stuff down on scrap pieces of paper, so I asked him if Rough Trade would get involved and he said they could bring the shop down; it's the first time they took it to a festival and it went really well. A few years later, they were doing other festivals – Green Man, Field Day, etc.

"I ASKED NIGEL HOUSE IF ROUGH TRADE WOULD GET INVOLVED. HE SAID THEY COULD BRING THE SHOP DOWN; IT'S THE FIRST TIME THEY TOOK IT TO A FESTIVAL"

SIMON TAFFE

ON THE BILL...

Simon's picks from the End Of The Road 2017 line-up

Bill Callahan
Apocalypse
Drag City
"There is something about this album that feels so complete. I believe it was all recorded live in the studio, with a fairly modest band setup. Bill has such an economy of words and the way he puts emphasis on one word and repeats it, until it almost takes on a new meaning, especially in the song *America*, is amazing. I also think his voice on this record really shows how well he can sing. On *Riding For The Feeling*, for instance. It annoys me when I hear people say: "I prefer it when it was Smog", I don't believe they've listened properly. He's releasing his best records now."

Courtney Marie Andrews
Honest Life
Loose Music
"Possibly my favourite record of 2016. Everyone I play it to

"I think it's just cool to have a record shop on site. You can discover a new band and instantly go and buy the vinyl at Rough Trade. That way, you don't forget. Granted, it can double your festival spend!"

LABEL OF LOVE

The bands of record label Bella Union have also featured heavily in End Of The Road line-ups and they, along with Heavenly and Secretly Canadian, have curated stages at the event. "I have a good relationship with a lot of record labels," Taffe says. "I love records and record labels."

Father-of-two Simon has seen his 3,000-strong record collection split in two in recent years – half at his former Sussex home where his ex and children still live and half in his rented London flat. He's looking forward to reuniting the collection when he buys a new house, but is undecided as to where – London or possibly Bristol, closer to Larmer Tree Gardens, the Victorian pleasure gardens on the Dorset/Wiltshire border that have been home to the festival since its inception in 2006.

"I haven't properly ordered it until I get a new place. I don't alphabetise them; if I'm having mates round and loves it immediately [including *Long Live Vinyl*]. It's her sixth album for the US folk artist, although seems to be the only one with a full release. It feels like she's honed her craft for many years, playing with great players and touring endlessly. I love it when you discover an artist like this and you have a whole back catalogue to explore."

The Jesus And Mary Chain
Stoned & Dethroned
Blanco Y Negro

"This is the Jesus And Mary Chain album that means the most to me, the one that doesn't really sound like any other JAMC album. It's the first record I heard by them, when I was 14 years old. This record was on constant repeat when I was younger and I went back to it recently; it still makes me want to go on a road trip. It has the best indie-rock duet ever in the form of *Sometimes Always* with Mazzy Star's Hope Sandoval. As a 14-year-old getting rejected by girls, hearing the line 'Fuck with me and I will fuck with you' channelled my energy and just made me want to be in a band."

Nap Eyes
Thought Rock Fish Scale
Paradise Of Batchelors/ You've Changed Records

"I love this band and this is my favourite album of theirs. It was recorded live straight to tape, which gives it this certain mono sound – a sound that I love. Think early Velvets, Bill Callahan and Jonathan Richman. The songwriting here is the best I've heard in a long time – philosophical, intimate and dark."

Vaudou Game
Kidayu
Hot Casa Records

"Like with many End Of The Road acts, I don't know why this band isn't more well known; though I'm sure their time will come. This record just makes me want to dance and never stop. Whenever I play it, people ask me who it is. That's always a good sign. It's the perfect African soul record and it's also my favourite record sleeve of 2016, with a brilliant illustration."

Tickets to End Of The Road Festival cost £189 (advance) and are available from endoftheroadfestival.com

SIMON TAFFE

drinking, just no. I generally order them by genre: soul, electronic, African, world music, country artists – Springsteen, Young, Dylan – and three shelves of American indie-alternative, that's kind of End Of The Road. And then I've got all my 7"s. I DJ with 7"s, rare soul music – music that no one knows, but you can dance to. The End Of The Road set is a bit more of a crowd-pleaser."

That's not where the relationship between the Festival and record collecting ends. The programme design was made to be the size of a 7", too. And when it comes to the line-up, Taffe remains heavily involved. "I ask myself the question, 'Would I buy that on vinyl?' before I book bands to play the festival. The whole idea of End Of The Road was to choose it through my record collection. When you look at the first few line-ups, I chose it from this," he says, pointing towards the End Of The Road shelves. "Nothing else. It's grown a bit now, and I have a team I work with who make suggestions. But if I don't like it, they don't get on the bill. I've turned down artists I knew would sell it out, but I want it to be something I'd love, that I'd go to. If I've got an offer out on a band, I don't want to jinx it, so I won't buy their vinyl until they confirm."

As Ezra Furman's manager, Taffe spends a lot of time in the US – the perfect place to pick up value-for-money records. He shows us his latest haul from Reckless Records in Chicago, plus some "weird shit" he picked up in a thrift store to remix into dance tracks with a friend – including a *Popeye* soundtrack(!).

"I ASK MYSELF THE QUESTION, 'WOULD I BUY THAT ON VINYL?' BEFORE I BOOK BANDS TO PLAY THE FESTIVAL"

SIMON TAFFE

TOP SHOP

Simon's favourite record store

Rooky Ricardo's Records, San Francisco

"This is my favourite record shop in the world. It only sells 7"s, mostly soul and 60s garage. During my last trip to the US, I spent two days out of the four-day trip in there and spent $400 to $500. They've got a whole counter in there and you go in and say, 'Right, I want soul-music covers of popular 60s songs, versions of Rolling Stones, Beatles, whatever – or the rarest recording of Nina Simone covering The Kinks or something, and he'll say, 'Come back in two hours', and when you go back, he'll have all these things he think you might like. Then you sit up there and they serve you wine, because with 7"s, you've got to listen to it all, both sides. If you know your labels well, you can take a risk – but otherwise, you have to listen. I took my son last time and I got him really into it, so we got a chair each and a stack each – he's got really good taste in music, better than me."

Best Of The Rest...

"Apart from Rough Trade East and Reckless Records in Chicago, which I've already mentioned, it has to be Amoeba in San Francisco, The Record Parlour in LA and End Of An Ear in Austin, Texas."

De-sleeving one of his most recent buys, he says: "One thing I love about vinyl is the fact you can get a really good record for two dollars. It's cheaper in America, because there's more of them. The original *The Modern Lovers* is in my Top 20 albums of all time; I paid $40 for that, but it's probably worth $100. I've been trying to be good recently because it got bad in Chicago, then I went to LA and it got worse. Though in LA, I did really well, 'cause it was all at [charity store] Goodwill."

GOODWILL HUNTING

A bit of know-how and a stroke of luck has led to some great finds, with Taffe managing to pick up Nina Simone's "best live album" (his words), '*Nuff Said!*, for $20 in Permanent Records in LA, as well as an original pressing of John Coltrane's *A Love Supreme* for $10 from a thrift store in Palm Springs. "My jazz friends are really jealous," he smiles. "You can find so much in Goodwill shops over there. These shops are like warehouses, you just find the most ridiculous stuff, like a Captain Beefheart original pressing for $10. If you're clever, America's the place, but it's getting harder and harder, because the people who want to make a living from it are going out to these little towns, buying it up and selling it on for more money."

Back across the Pond, he criticises rising record prices. "England's tight on space and we overprice them in London. I don't like it when it's £50 for a limited-edition vinyl. I went into Rough Trade on Record Store Day and I saw the Father John Misty Record for £50; I looked for the normal version and couldn't see it, so I asked at the counter and they said, 'No, this is it', and I said, 'Well is he going to come round and play a fucking acoustic show for me?'. Sure, it looks really nice, but it's not even worth it when it's that price. It's not fair to diehard fans, because you know they're going to go get that and it costs them £50, it's painful."

Taffe shows us two identical Father John Misty records that stand out like a sore thumb on his bespoke record shelves. They feature a pop-up sleeve with a music player. "Maybe it's part of a gimmick with him," muses Taffe, who's booked the former Fleet Foxes drummer for End Of The Road this year.

"He wants to be ridiculous, so fair enough. I think I'll get rid of them, though – it sticks out a bit. It'll probably be worth a fortune; I can't sell records for money, though, I'd rather give it to my family." ●

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VINYL GURU, NEWCASTLE

With stock that ranges from a few pounds to £3,950 for a signed David Bowie print, Tyneside's Vinyl Guru is no run-of-the-mill record and accessories shop. **Ian Ravendale** investigates…

Situated on a trading estate 15 minutes from Newcastle city centre, Vinyl Guru is a truly independent record shop with everything a vinyl connoisseur could possibly want. The leering, grinning Guru face above the front door draws you into an Aladdin's cave of records, picture discs, album-art prints and accessories, from slip mats to high-end turntables. And, for that extra-special space in your record room, why not pick up a refurbished Rock-Ola jukebox from the late 1950s?

The man with a plan who turned his dream of owning a record and accessories shop into reality is Chris Larkin, an amiable but sharp music fan originally from Hartlepool. He gained his record-shop experience in the mid-80s when vinyl ruled, CDs were a novelty and streaming was just a glint in a geek's eye. Larkin loved every second of that experience, as he explains: "I went to university in York to do a media degree and used to hang out at Red Rhino, the city's main indie record shop. When I left uni, I had a couple of interviews with the BBC, where I came close but didn't get the jobs. As a stop-gap, I got a job at Our Price in London and stayed there from 1983 to 1986.

"It was brilliant, I felt at home there because the people I worked with were into the same sort of music and were the same sort of age. I moved around different London branches, met lots of great characters and would go out on an evening to gigs with them and have a good social life. We used to get quite a few people out of bands coming into the shops, including Mick Jones from The Clash. I worked in the branch that was near The Old Bailey and he'd come in at lunchtime when the court case with The Clash was on."

Returning north to work in the media, Chris got back into music, eventually setting up an indie label called Audio Excess. "I was warned against starting a label by several people," he recalls. "It was something I always fancied doing and had the time and the financial backing to do it from money I'd saved.

"This led me on to thinking about how I could make a business related to music. It wasn't going to be a label, because it was pretty much impossible to make a living out of it. This was four or five years ago and it was becoming obvious there was starting to be an interest again in vinyl records. Amazon started selling vinyl, and if you bought a vinyl record, you could get a free download. It was also happening in shops, where you'd get a download code when you bought the vinyl. It was marrying the two things together with the advantages of the download and the physical product.

"There were always collectors who stuck with vinyl. Stuff was still released in limited numbers for most things. It never totally died off. So we started selling accessories – sleeves, cleaning products and things for displaying LPs.

"Nobody on the high street was doing it. There were a couple of big mail-order companies, but not much online. So we started selling via eBay, Amazon and more recently, our own website (www.vinylguru.co.uk). The mail-order companies were doing it in the traditional way, where people

> "IT WAS BECOMING OBVIOUS THERE WAS STARTING TO BE AN INTEREST AGAIN IN VINYL RECORDS. AMAZON STARTED SELLING VINYL, IT WAS HAPPENING IN SHOPS… THERE WERE ALWAYS COLLECTORS WHO STUCK WITH VINYL"
>
> **CHRIS LARKIN**

would ring them up. We were different, because we had a site. We got a lot of business through that. It was hard, but we did really well out of it, selling to independent shops and, in some cases, to distributors and chains of shops. We started small and kept expanding.

"We now have our own brand on all the accessories. If you go into a traditional record shop, they sell records, T-shirts… they might sell books. But they don't sell turntables, mats, belts, styluses, prints or storage boxes. Although we're not a megastore in size, the concept is to have that approach. If anyone comes for anything to do with vinyl records, we should be able to say, 'Yep, got that!'. Each time someone would inquire about something, we'd think: 'That's a good idea!', and we'd get some!

"We kept adding things along the way, until we got to the point where we sold absolutely everything connected with vinyl. Turntables, belts, styluses, sleeves, cleaners, brushes, mats…"

Turntables in particular can be an expensive outlay for an independent operation, and it's something the company have eased themselves into, as Chris relates: "We have a sample stock, one each of a few different turntables and we can sell from those, or order them in when we need to. We started off selling the cheaper turntables and then gradually went higher-end over time. The most expensive one we have in stock is £900, but we can order in anything!"

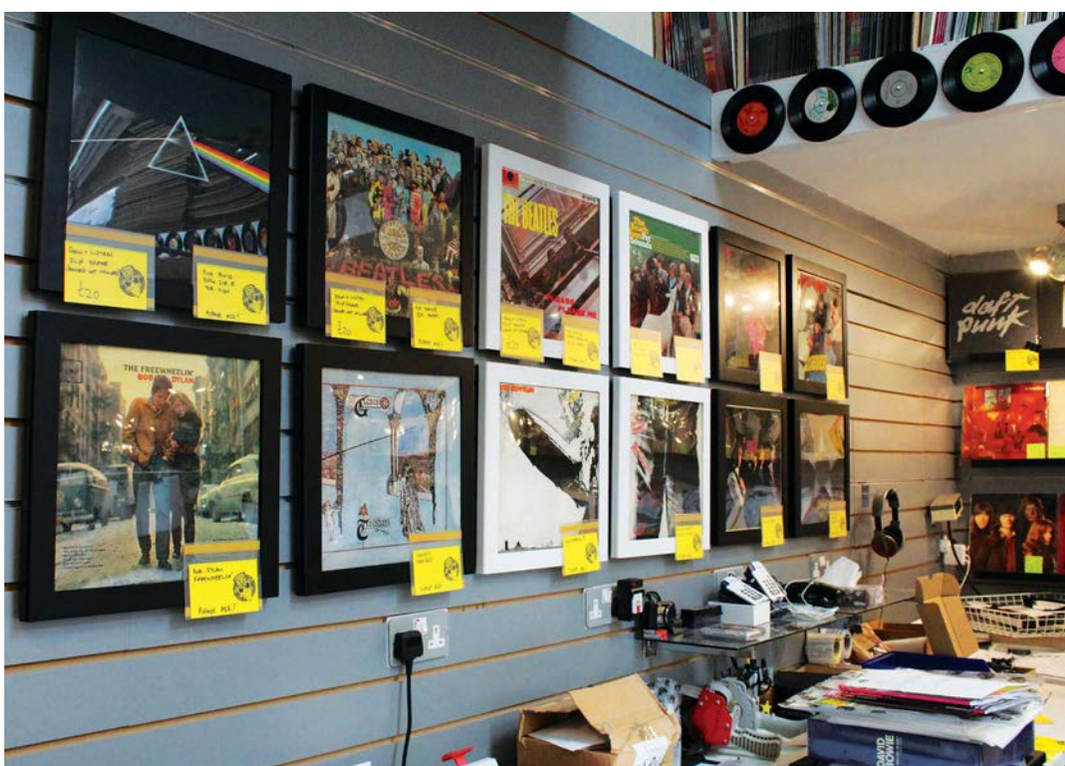
Larkin's business was initially all mail order, but as Vinyl Guru grew, it became obvious the operation needed premises, and they moved into a unit on the Airport Industrial Estate, a 15-minute Metro journey away from the centre of Newcastle. "We couldn't work from home anymore," says Chris. "Initially, we were looking for somewhere where we could just do the internet business. I looked at a few places and discounted them for various reasons. This place, I really liked because of the location."

Location plays a major part in most retail businesses, and Chris thought long and hard about the pros and cons of Vinyl Guru not being in the centre of Newcastle: "Being here is a disadvantage in terms of day-to-day footfall from people just passing by. But an advantage in lots of other ways, like buying second-hand record collections. People can pull up right outside the unit with a boot full of heavy records."

FAMILY STYLE

Vinyl Guru is very much a family concern. Chris's sons, Rob and Dan, both work in the shop; Rob's main role is to provide office support, handling the development and maintenance of the website and other online platforms, stock control and record valuations, along with running the mail-order operations. When he's not at university, Dan works part-time in the shop. "The majority of people who come to the shop will buy something," says Rob. "We tend not to get time-wasters," adds Chris. "In town, inevitably, you get a lot of people who come in out of curiosity."

The outside of Vinyl Guru may look a bit like a garage, but Chris has various visions of how he'll remedy that, along with expanding the business so that the



more visually appealing items can be shown off to their best advantage via a city-centre premises.

"We have thought about having a big 'Vinyl Guru' logo or some sort of graphic on the roller door," he says. "We're aiming at keeping here for the internet side of the business, but looking at other premises in town to do the 'shop' part. We've just started Vinyl Gallery, selling signed vinyl-related art prints that the shop in town would focus on, along with higher-end products like first pressings, collectables, turntables and jukeboxes."

Due to space restrictions, the store currently houses only one vintage jukebox. "We've actually got five at the moment," says Chris. "One here and the others in storage. They're refurbished Silver Age Rock-Ola Jukeboxes, dating from the late 1950s to the early 60s. They've been restored to close-to-factory condition using original parts and finishes, by a team of specialists located around the UK."

Selling significant quantities of records at the Vinyl Guru unit has been a relatively recent development. Previously, albums were confined to one corner of the shop. Now, records, framed album sleeves, picture discs, coloured vinyl and more hang from the ceiling and on every wall, for reasons Chris is happy to explain: "One of the things I'd always wanted to do is open a record shop!

> ALTHOUGH WE'RE NOT A MEGASTORE IN SIZE, THE CONCEPT IS TO HAVE THAT APPROACH. WE KEPT ADDING THINGS ALONG THE WAY, UNTIL WE GOT TO THE POINT WHERE WE SOLD ABSOLUTELY EVERYTHING CONNECTED WITH VINYL
>
> **CHRIS LARKIN**

THE BIG THREE

A trio of Chris Larkin's personal favourites

DAVID BOWIE
HUNKY DORY
UK LP RCA Records

"This stands out for me as David Bowie starting to explore different styles. Kicking off with his 'mission statement' *Changes*, it's a very accomplished piece of work with Bowie's songwriting and performances complemented by beautiful string arrangements by Mick Ronson, Rick Wakeman's masterful keyboards and Ken Scott's exquisite production. It's an album I've come back to again and again, and it remains as fresh and as stunning as the first time, every time."

THE BEATLES
THE WHITE ALBUM
UK LP Apple Records

"I discovered this one rummaging through my cousin's record collection in the early 70s. It was an object of desire totally out of reach of a schoolboy whose pocket money only stretched to the odd 7". The album begs the question: 'What were The Beatles playing at?'. A plain white sleeve with just 'The Beatles' barely visible on the cover; an everything-but-the-kitchen-sink affair, that runs the gamut from British folk whimsy through to (pre-dating) full-blown heavy metal on *Helter Skelter*."

LED ZEPPELIN
PHYSICAL GRAFFITI
UK LP Atlantic Records

"The mystique surrounding Zeppelin back in the early 70s is difficult to comprehend, unless you were there. My first exposure was a grainy black-and-white silent film, that provided the visuals to *Trampled Underfoot* on *The Old Grey Whistle Test*. I heard that a new boy at our school had a copy. I set to work on getting an invite round to his house for a listen… I was blown away. I became a lifelong fan, scouring the second-hand record shops to start my Zeppelin collection."

Then… the penny dropped. I realised I could do it here! Having the record shop side would attract people in to the accessories side. People weren't going to turn up just to buy some sleeves! But they will to look through the records."

Browsing the shelves, alongside current indie releases we find a healthy stock of the usual classics. "I stick with what I know," says Chris. "I buy what I like! Classic rock: Hendrix, Zeppelin, Pink Floyd, but also newer bands…"

Vinyl Guru also buy and sell rare records, and pricing is crucial in making or losing a sale or acquisition, as Larkin acknowledges: "I have quite an instinct for what things are worth. If you're looking through any collection, you'll see the odd thing and think, 'That looks interesting'. It might be the name of the band, or the label it's on. Once you've pulled it out, you can research online."

A major part of the Vinyl Guru strategy is the shop's website, which in addition to being an online sales catalogue, also has interviews and features about music. "It was just a case of trying out a bunch of things and seeing what worked," says Rob. "It took a while to pick up, but that was expected, really."

"Editorial is much more likely to get talked about on social media than having a great deal on sleeves," says Chris. "We now get a lot more business through the website. There's enough visitors to the sales side to sustain the features side, so we'll come back to it."

The shop's Vinyl Gallery will have a David Bowie bias, at least initially. "There's a number of Bowie art prints that have been published over the years, mainly prints of the album covers for *Ziggy Stardust*, *Hunky Dory* and *Aladdin Sane*. What they did at the time was publish a limited number. In the case of *Ziggy Stardust*, it was 195 – and a number of those, 50 I think, were signed by Bowie. We've got one from the original run from 2006. When it was originally issued, the signed prints retailed at £750. Now they retail at £3,950, for just the unframed signed print! We haven't sold it yet…

"We've just bought the web domain name for bowieshop.co.uk and bowieshop.com, and are going to be setting up a specialist David Bowie online store. A lot of what we've developed over the last couple of years has brought us a big David Bowie customer base. I've got a big personal collection of his records and Bowie has become a major part of the business.

"We had a launch at local gallery Toffee Factory in Newcastle, as part of the Newcastle Late Shows of various events over the city. In addition to the Bowie print, we've got *Led Zeppelin IV* signed by Jimmy Page, *The Dark Side Of The Moon* signed by Storm Thorgerson, T. Rex's *Electric Warrior* signed by [drummer and only surviving band member] Bill Legend and the sleeve artist Aubrey Powell of Hipgnosis. We've also got some other material from an artist called Morgan Howell, who does super-sized paintings of single records in their covers. They're 27 inches square. Pretty big!" ●

> "A LOT OF WHAT WE'VE DEVELOPED OVER THE LAST COUPLE OF YEARS HAS BROUGHT US A BIG DAVID BOWIE CUSTOMER BASE. I'VE GOT A BIG PERSONAL COLLECTION OF HIS RECORDS AND BOWIE HAS BECOME A MAJOR PART OF THE BUSINESS"
>
> **CHRIS LARKIN**

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COVER STAR

KLAUS VOORMANN

He's the celebrated German graphic designer who created the classic cover for The Beatles' seminal 1966 album *Revolver,* as well as for their three-part *Anthology* series. Over a 57-year career, he's been sought by bands from the Bee Gees to Wet Wet Wet. **Jonathan Webster** meets Klaus Voormann…

With a commemorative Grammy Anniversary edition of his *Revolver 50* book selling out in mere days, *Long Live Vinyl* catches up with artist, producer and multi-instrumentalist Klaus Voormann at his small, neat Bavarian studio to ask him to reminisce about his long and enduring friendship with the Fab Four and get an insight into his incredibly successful twin careers in graphic design and music.

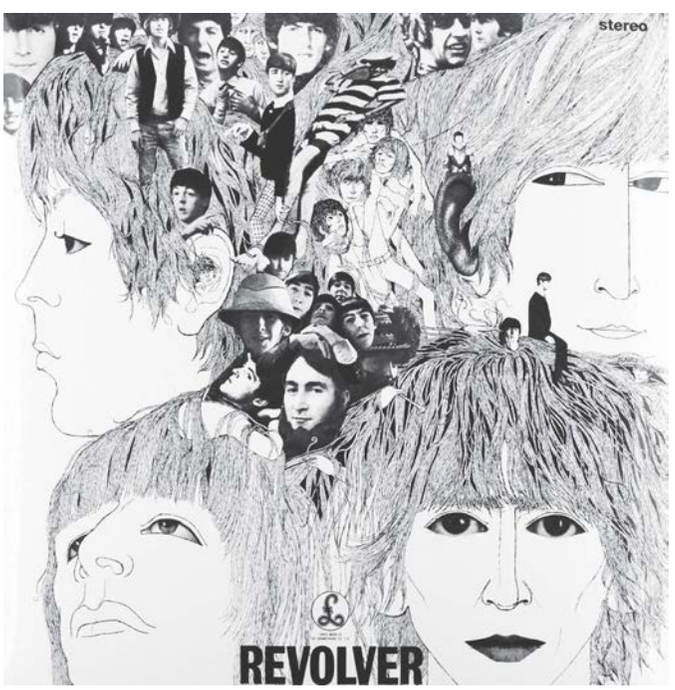
Voormann kicks off our conversation by taking us back to the fateful phone call he received out of the blue in spring, 1966. At the time, he was living in Parliament Hill, London, with his then-wife Christine.

"Christine picked up the phone," says Voormann, "and turned to me with the words: 'Some John wants to speak with you'. John [Lennon] began right away with, 'Hey Klaus, do you have an idea for our new album cover?'.

"My first reaction was, 'A cover for the new Beatles album?'. For several moments, I was rendered speechless. And there was this damn voice inside my head, saying, 'You will never do this!'. 'Yes, I can do this', I countered.

"John was clearly getting concerned: 'Klaus, Are you okay?'. I managed to find my voice. 'It's okay, John, I'm fine. I'm just gobsmacked!'. 'Okay,' John said. 'Then come to the studio, where we can discuss everything'. And with that, he was gone."

When Voormann got to EMI Studios the next day, all involved were in the control room waiting to play *Revolver* for him. At first, Klaus was overwhelmed. "I closed my eyes and immersed myself in a surreal world of sounds, and saw images and visions



PAUL ON KLAUS

Of Voormann's new book, Paul McCartney wrote (in his foreword): "Klaus is a mate from way back in Hamburg, during our exciting Reeperbahn days. His drawings always impressed me and his cool sense of humour comes through in this graphic novel. It's good for me to see the other side of a story I know so well, and to realise aspects like the sheer panic that Klaus must have felt at being asked to do our album cover. In the end, the *Revolver* cover was a classic and this book is another!"

before me. For a moment, I feared that someone had slipped LSD in my coffee. When it was finally all over, they all looked at me with eager anticipation. But I was unable to express my feelings in words. Instead, I could only stammer, 'All I can say is… I love it… really!'"

At this point in proceedings, Voormann expected there would be a brainstorming session, where he'd join with the assembled Beatles and their recording team to throw some ideas around for the visuals. The Beatles were having none of it. Voormann remembers them saying: "'Klaus, you're the graphic artist, we create the music, and you create your ideas for the LP cover. You can do what you want to do.'

"I was speechless. It's an absolute dream of any designer to simply do what they want to do, with no-one interfering. I was proud that my friends – the top, top band in the world – trusted me with this project."

Although elated, nauseous and anxiety-ridden in equal measure, Voormann decided to grab the bull by the horns and accept the commission. When he got back to his flat in Parliament Hill, he told himself, 'These songs are revolutionary, and the cover needs to be, too!'.

> "I WAS PROUD THAT MY FRIENDS – THE TOP BAND IN THE WORLD – TRUSTED ME WITH THIS PROJECT"
>
> **KLAUS VOORMANN**

REVELATION ON THE HEAD

In order to make a solid start, Voormann knew that he needed to find a visual anchor or theme for his design. He grabbed a piece of paper and started posing such questions to himself as: 'Who's the current type of Beatles fan?' and 'What do album covers look like that are currently on the market?'. "Images and ideas started racing through my mind," Voormann recalls. Then, suddenly, he had a Eureka moment: 'Wasn't hair The Beatles' visual brand?' he asked himself. 'Of course it is, they are called the Mop Tops,' he remembers thinking. "They were revolutionising music, not just with their soundscapes, but with their appearance – and especially with their hair."

Having established the concept, Voormann began busying himself with some ideas for the cover. He could have taken the obvious route, with visual cues reflecting the emerging flower power and psychedelic scenes, but he took a radically different direction. He decided: "My friends' next album cover will be in black and white!".

With his core design components fixed, Voormann now addressed the question of how to portray The Beatles. Hair would be the framing device, weaving in and out of the picture, but what would The Beatles themselves be doing? Should they be in a hot air balloon? No. Or sitting in a boat. Again, no… But it was not long before it came to him: the cover design should focus on a close-up of their faces (and, of course, that hair).

After the fortnight to come up with the goods was over, Voormann presented The Beatles with his ideas – and to his relief, they liked them.

Knowing he was now firmly on the right path, Voormann returned to his makeshift studio to add the other big element: lots of small black and white photographic images of The Beatles in various, often zany poses. Essentially, what he was aiming for was a scrapbook-collage effect, which he pulled off in spectacular fashion. He finished off by finalising the graphics in pen and ink.

All that remained was the final presentation. Voormann remembers vividly the day he presented his

KLAUS VOORMANN

KLAUS ON THE BEATLES

"In 1960, I was living in Hamburg and was already a successful graphic designer, designing record covers," remembers Voormann of first meeting the Fab Four.

"I was also part of a cool, beatnik set called The Exis, led by my girlfriend, Astrid Kirchherr. We were trendsetters, very arrogant and very into the colour black – especially when it came to clothing.

"My relationship with Astrid was passionate, but volatile. After one of our many arguments, I found myself aimlessly walking into a pub-club on the Reeperbahn. I, who could not even spell rock 'n' roll correctly, encountered for the first time the amazing full force that was The Beatles.

"Never before had I seen or heard anything like it. There was John screaming his heart out. Paul was jumping around like a rubber ball. George was grinning impishly underneath his thick, brown mop of hair. Pete [Best] hammered his drums as if he was chopping them up. Finally, there was cool, sophisticated Stu [Sutcliffe] in sunglasses.

"There was such life-affirming energy emanating from The Beatles. The lads were having such incredible fun onstage, and everybody in the club, including myself, was part of it!"

cover design to The Beatles, Brian Epstein, George Martin and EMI's top brass. He could tell by their reaction that, to a man, they all really liked it. Voormann recalls: "Brian was actually sobbing with joy. He came up to me and said, 'Klaus, I was so worried, because I was scared the fans wouldn't accept this new type of music. But your cover is the bridge we need to draw them in.'"

Voormann is remarkably sanguine about the fact that he was paid only £50 for this prestigious job – not bad, but no great shakes considering how iconic the *Revolver* cover became. He says: "At the time, I would have done it for nothing!". His reward, however, was to come in the form of recognition from his peers. In 1967, Klaus won the Grammy Award for Best Album Cover, Graphic Arts.

Over the last 45 years, Klaus Voormann has moved with considerable success and adroitness between dual careers as a graphic artist, designing album covers for a wide and eclectic range of artists, and as a highly accomplished bass guitarist. He has Stuart Sutcliffe (The Beatles' original bass player) to thank for introducing him to the instrument in Hamburg, where the Mop Tops met and befriended Voormann, back in 1960.

Over the years, Voormann has been the bass guitarist for Manfred Mann (1966 to 1969) and The Plastic Ono Band, and has also been an in-demand session bassist for Lou Reed (*Transformer*), Carly Simon (*You're So Vain*), George Harrison (*All Things Must Pass*) and as part of George Harrison's Concert For Bangladesh, and John Lennon's *Imagine* – and that's just the tip of the musical iceberg.

He can also add stints as a fine record producer and A&R talent scout to the pages of his portfolio. Invariably, though, his personal and creative connection with The Beatles, both as a band and as solo artists, has always acted as a magnet – drawing Voormann back into their sphere to design more covers for them.

2016 saw the 50th anniversary of *Revolver*, with Klaus and Christina Voormann releasing the hardback book *Birth Of An Icon Revolver 50*.

Klaus illustrated the graphic novel at the core of the book, with Christina writing the story and daughter Ruscha, also a graphic designer, producing the cover. Earlier this year, a collaboration with Genesis Publications saw the Grammy Aniversary Edition boxset of the book, limited to 500 copies, sell out after a 10-day presale.

However, the *Revolver* visual legacy does not rest there, for Klaus Voormann is in the midst of producing a very special series of Beatles-inspired artworks for Genesis (some 250 in all), entitled *Revolver: Collage 50*, available to collectors and music-loving punters with deep pockets. What you get for your money is a truly unique piece of artwork – inspired by Voormann's original visuals for *Revolver* – designed, painted and signed by the artist himself.

Voormann says: "I had the idea of doing a collage again, so people could get an original in their hands. It's a different version of the *Revolver* cover. Each artwork measures 24 ¾-inches by 24 ¾-inches, and is framed. Furthermore, each has been individually decorated with elements handcrafted by me. In fact, I used the pens, pencils, scissors, ink wells and other artist's tools of the trade I used for the cover design of *Revolver*."

To fans of The Beatles and cover art per se who brand Voormann with the lofty label of 'artist', his reply is simple. "No, I'm not an artist, I'm a graphic designer, and I do whatever's necessary to get the product and/or the musicians' message across. That will determine what materials I use."

Materials-wise, Klaus actually favours a surprisingly limited range of tools: they include a scratchboard, pens and ink, some paints, and not too much else. Yet with them, he's managed to carve a major place for himself in the pantheon of great record-cover designers. Though he's still going strong, work-wise, Klaus would be the first to admit he is no spring chicken anymore. Asked how he'd like to be remembered, quick as a flash, he replies: "Not at all! When I'm gone, I'm gone!" ●

Revolver 50 The Collage Series, by Klaus Voormann, is published by Genesis Publications
www.revolvercollage.com

KLAUS ON DYSLEXIA AND MUSIC...

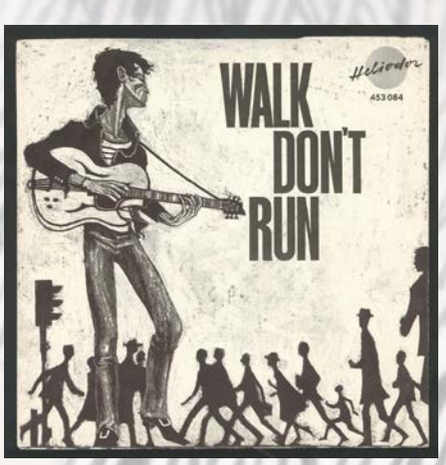
"Because I'm dyslexic, I found (and still find) it much easier to communicate through visuals and music, and to put my feelings down on paper as small drawings," says Voormann. "This remains for me the best and most honest way to express myself.

"There are some people who can't relate to or enjoy music. I find that very strange. Music has always been a part of my life. My parents were musical and I have always been so, playing classical piano as a youngster/teenager and then, of course, bass."

"IMAGES AND IDEAS STARTED RACING THROUGH MY MIND"

OTHER CLASSIC COVERS

KLAUS VOORMANN

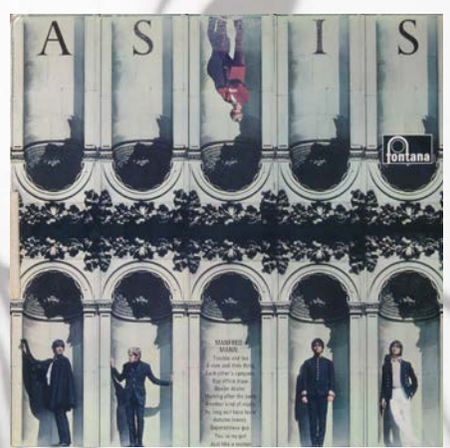


WALK... DON'T RUN
THE TYPHOONS
HELIODOR, 1960

This is a very spirited (1960 single) version by The Typhoons of the million-selling instrumental *Walk Don't Run* by The Ventures. Voormann was working in Hamburg and already getting record-company commissions. Of this cover illustration, he says: "I thought a black and white scratch technique would work well. The artwork also represents my beatnik leanings at the time: all dark and moody."

PIONEERS OF JAZZ NO.13
JIMMIE NOONE
CORAL, 1960 (EP)

The Coral label was part of the mighty Deutsche Grammophon record stable. At the turn of the 60s, they reissued a number of old recordings of US jazz pioneers such as Jimmie Noone. Voormann was given *carte blanche* by the record company to: "Do what I want! I felt colour was right for this type of happy music, and to portray the roaring 1920s. When I was 15, I started getting into jazz. I loved Miles Davis and Chet Baker."



AS IS
MANFRED MANN
FONTANA, 1966

Manfred Mann were taking off in 1966, when Voormann was asked to join as bass player. Manfred and Fontana asked him to do the cover of *As Is*. He opted for a classical approach, with the band standing in arches by London's Hyde Park. Voormann himself took the photograph.

ANTHOLOGY 1, 2 AND 3
THE BEATLES
APPLE 1995-1996

Voormann says: "Neil Aspinall called me and said, did I have any ideas 'to incorporate 10 to 11 years of Beatles music into one image?'. Apple put pressure on me by telling me, 'Klaus, we have seven other artists putting together ideas for this project'. After experimenting with several ideas, I came up with this concept: 'Why not do a billboard, where you have all the posters from their career, where the paper rips off?'. Then I cut my painting into three parts for the three CDs. Each cover is a photorealistic painting. There was about 1,000 hours of work. So you can imagine my relief when Neil said: 'You've got the job!'... I got paid a lot more than I got for *Revolver*!"

IDEA
BEE GEES
ATCO, 1968

Released in September 1968, *Idea* was the fifth album by the Bee Gees. It sold over a million copies internationally. This cover was for the North American release on the Atco label – in the UK, it was released by Polydor, with a different cover. Klaus Voormann, by now king of the collage, went for a composite head made from each band member. He says: "Like my cover for *Revolver*, I used photos, and pen and ink. This is much more telescoped. I focused on one conglomerate face."

GARY WRIGHT'S EXTRACTION
GARY WRIGHT
A&M RECORDS, 1971

Klaus produced a rather minimalist cover illustration for this solo album by the ex-Spooky Tooth keyboardist, using a large jar as his central image, with Wright's face smack-bang in the middle of the label. Appearances can be deceptive – this record cover was innovative, in that it was actually one big piece of paper folded six times. Punters could store the record, or open the cover and put it on their wall. Voormann recalls: "On the inside, there was a huge portrait of Gary Wright. On the other side, a very surrealistic background."

WHEN WE WAS FAB
GEORGE HARRISON
DARK HORSE RECORDS, 1988

Co-written with Jeff Lynne, *When We Was Fab* is a song that finds George singing about the halcyon days with his Beatles bandmates. The single incorporates Klaus Voormann's *Revolver* line drawing of Harrison, along with a similar updated line drawing of George from 22 years later. The song is up-tempo yet reflective, with its psychedelic effects and a string quartet.

SCANDINAVIAN LEATHER
TURBONEGRO
BURNING HEART RECORDS, 2003

"Turbonegro are a Norwegian deathpunk band," says Klaus. "When their record company approached me and asked me to do the cover of *Scandinavian Leather*, I said, 'I know nothing about deathpunk [a genre that combines glam-rock, punk-rock and hard-rock styles]. But when I talked to one of the musicians, he said: 'Hey Klaus, we're confident you can do us a great cover.' So I relented!" Turbonegro lost no time in sending Klaus past record covers and photos of the band. The main visual cue came from snake-like tattoos their hardcore fans sport on their arms.

TIMELESS
WET WET WET
DRY RECORDS, 2007

Wet Wet Wet have been great purveyors of a heady, sweet mix of pop, blue-eyed soul and soft rock for 35 years now, but are still best known for their massive-selling 1994 cover of The Troggs' 1960s hit *Love Is All Around* – 15 weeks atop the British charts. *Timeless* was the first new album after the band's tentative reformation in 2004, after a period of group tensions over songwriting royalties and singer/frontman Marti Pellow's drink and drug problems. Once again, it shows how Klaus, with minimal tools (this time just pencil and paper) captured the renewed unity of the band with tendrils and hair helping to interlock their heads.

GLORIA
MANDO DIAO
MAJESTY, 2009

Mando Diao are one of Sweden's most successful alt-rock bands, taking their musical influences from the 1960s and 70s. With each album release, the band's international success has grown. Apart from their home country, they also have a big fanbase in Germany, Austria, Switzerland and Japan. With his empathy for the music of the golden age of pop/rock, the band felt Voormann would be the perfect designer of the cover for their 2009 single *Gloria*. In this cover illustration, he and his son Maximilian capture Mando Diao's sinuousness to perfection.

A SIDEMAN'S JOURNEY
VOORMANN & FRIENDS
UNIVERSAL, 2009

A Sideman's Journey is Voormann's first solo album after he brought his playing to recordings by nearly all the ex-Beatles, as well as Harry Nilsson, Carly Simon (*You're So Vain*) and Lou Reed (*Transformer*). This record features Macca, Ringo, Cat Stevens, Bonnie Bramlett, Albert Lee, Dr John, Van Dyke Parks, Joe Walsh and The Manfreds. Of course, there was only one person who could do the cover justice – Voormann's trademark pen-and-ink flourishes are combined with photos of all the artists. Klaus says: "This album felt like a real celebration, everything is connected to my musical past." ●

Classic Album

MASSIVE ATTACK *BLUE LINES*

A dance album you couldn't dance to, a club classic for when the clubs closed – Massive Attack's *Blue Lines* truly redefined notions of artist, group and genre. *Michael Leonard* explores the amorphous 1991 debut from the Bristol collective that left an indelible mark on British music history…

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PM 264
massive
2
blue lines

MUSHROOM
Andrew Vowles left Massive Attack shortly after the release of Mezzanine, the band's third album, reportedly due to differences over the band's musical direction. He also worked as a co-producer on Neneh Cherry's 1989 debut Raw Like Sushi.

3D
A pioneer of stencil graffiti and the co-designer of all of Massive Attack's live lighting shows, Robert Del Naja has also collaborated with Unkle on the albums Never, Never, Land and War Stories; Guy Garvey; Thom Yorke and Jean-Michel Jarre.

DADDY G
Emerging from the soundsystem scene in Bristol's St Paul's neighbourhood in the early 80s and working as a DJ at the Dugout nightclub, Grant Marshall also worked in the city's Revolver Records shop. He released a DJ-Kicks compilation in 2004 that's well worth investigating.

Avalon

In both USA and UK music, 1991 was very much a story of how the West won. Stateside, Seattle's grunge triumvirate of Nirvana, Pearl Jam and Soundgarden saw rock listeners turn their heads towards a new, provincial hotbed of musical creativity. In the UK, it was Bristol, and a new take on 'dance' music led by Massive Attack. Seattle and Bristol have many similarities – both Western ports, 'outsider' cities caricatured as rainy and dank, both technological cities, despite their 'bumpkin' rep – but musically, they were as different as chalk and cheese… or coffee and rum.

Just as grunge's breakthrough into the mainstream had its roots in Seattle's Sub Pop label, so Massive Attack's 'Bristol sound' or 'trip hop' (terms they *all* hate, of course) grew out of a local sound system, The Wild Bunch. A sprawling collective of DJs, engineers, rappers and graffiti artists emerging from the streets of Bristol in the 80s, The Wild Bunch were more gang than band, but were the springboard for the careers of Milo Johnson (aka DJ Milo/Nature Boy), über-producer Nellee Hooper (Soul II Soul, Björk, U2) and, of course, Massive Attack.

Massive Attack's Daddy G remembered the Bristol street scene that birthed The Wild Bunch as "punks, bikers, dreads, you know, just a whole cacophony of people in this one place. It's surprising how so many mixtures of people in that one place don't actually erupt… I think a lot of people were into spliffing, so it kept everyone tranquil."

Just as Seattle's slackers eventually rose, so did Bristol's spliffers. But it took time. Even *Blue Lines*, apart from one single, wasn't initially a huge hit, reaching No. 13 in the UK. Perhaps because, at the turn of the 90s, no-one outside of Wild Bunch circles really understood who or what Massive Attack were. After all, their main spokesman – if the press-shy members had a spokesman at all – was an ex-punk, graffiti-daubing, spiky-haired white boy with an Italian name. Perhaps it was his own mix of influences that caused Robert '3D' Del Naja to explain, in an early interview with *NME*: "We haven't really got a line-up. We're not governed by bass, guitar, drums and singer. We're just a loosely based idea. The difference between now and The Wild Bunch is that we're not fighting for supremacy all the time, we agree to differ… The whole of the *Blue Lines* album was about us being coerced into a studio, and then confronted with trying to make a demo. It wasn't like we sat around on the piano writing songs together."

"We're not governed by bass, guitar, drums and singer. We're just a loosely based idea"

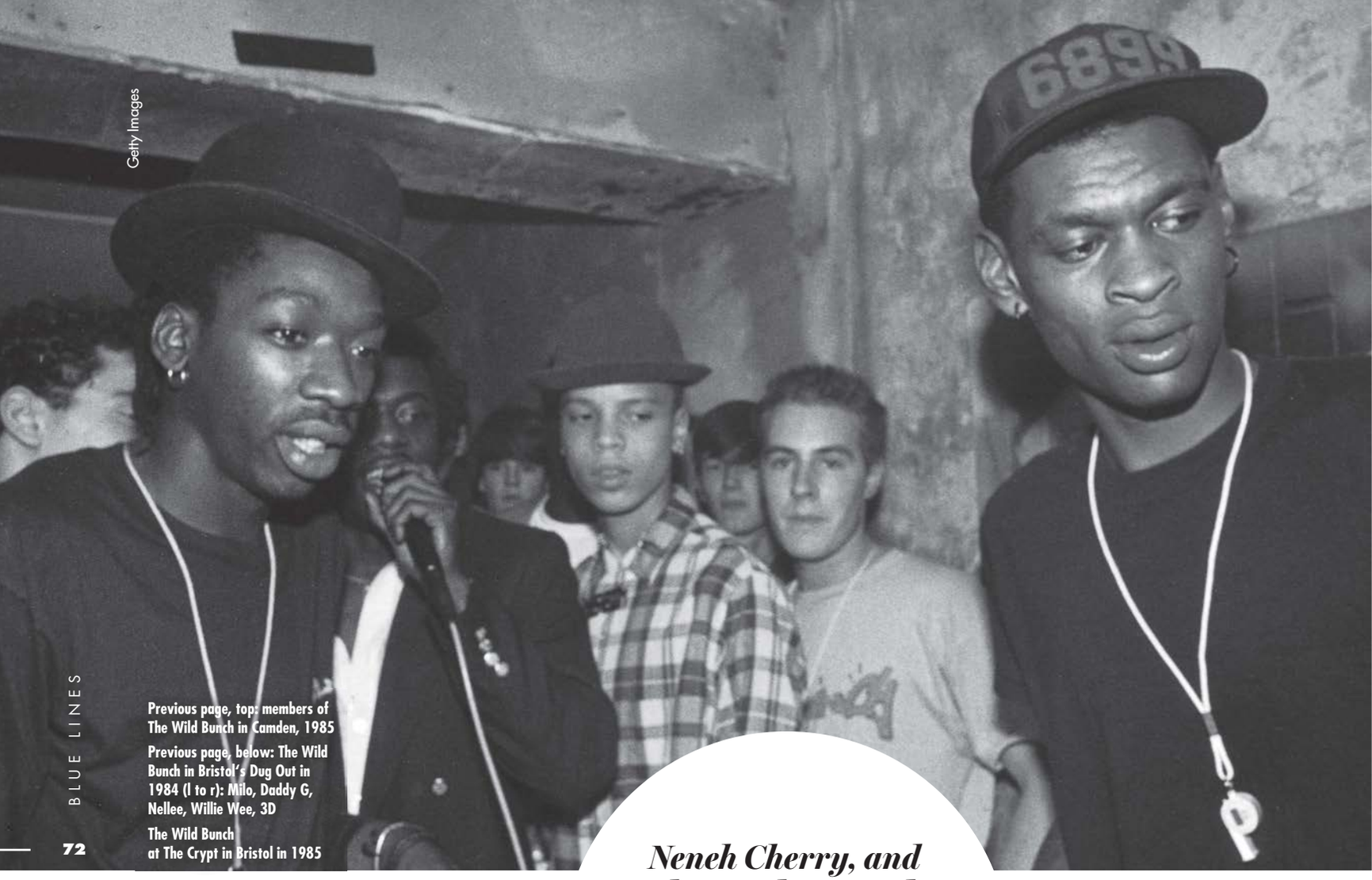
ROBERT '3D' DEL NAJA

Avalon

"We were lazy Bristol twats," Daddy G later recalled. "It was Neneh Cherry who kicked our arses and got us in the studio… I was still DJing, but what we were trying to do was create dance music for the head, rather than the feet."

The description was totally apt. *Blue Lines* melded 'dance' styles like no other album before it. It was 'soul music', shot through with an acute melancholy: rhymes of "No sunshine in my life/ Because the way I deal is shady" or "Don't need another lover/ I just need, I'm insecure" weren't the average hip-hop currency. The enigmatic Tricky admitted at the time: "I've even tried writing hard, aggressive raps. But, at the end of the day, that's not me."

It was 'hip-hop', but true to the original cut-and-paste ethos, which had somehow got lost. Early-90s hip-hop had sort of settled into funk party jams or gangsta chronicles: far from the 80s days when Afrika Bambaataa would mash up funk, punk, rock, Kraftwerk and *Apache*. *Blue Lines*



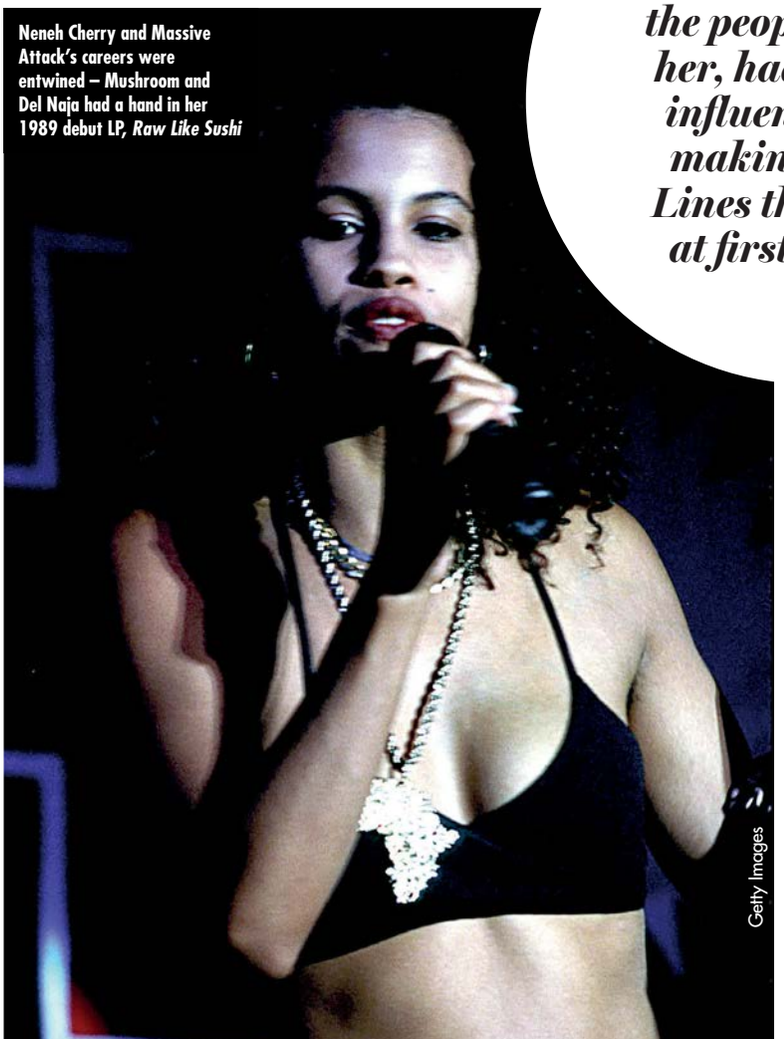
Getty Images

Previous page, top: members of The Wild Bunch in Camden, 1985

Previous page, below: The Wild Bunch in Bristol's Dug Out in 1984 (l to r): Milo, Daddy G, Nellee, Willie Wee, 3D

The Wild Bunch at The Crypt in Bristol in 1985

Neneh Cherry, and the people around her, had a bigger influence on the making of Blue Lines than many at first realised



Getty Images

Neneh Cherry and Massive Attack's careers were entwined – Mushroom and Del Naja had a hand in her 1989 debut LP, *Raw Like Sushi*

picked up the multi-mix mantle again, dialling in dub and fusion samples, a didgeridoo and billowing classical strings. Even when *Blue Lines* sampled classic soulsters such as Isaac Hayes, it turned his music woozy. And like early hip-hop, the mic was being passed around over the DJ/producers' beats and breaks: the whispered rhymes of Tricky and 3D, the rich baritone of G, the honeyed soul voices of Shara Nelson and Tony Bryan, the mellifluous roots reggae of Horace Andy. Throughout its stylistic shifts, *Blue Lines* sounded familiar enough to be 'fashionable'… yet, simultaneously, like nothing else you'd ever heard.

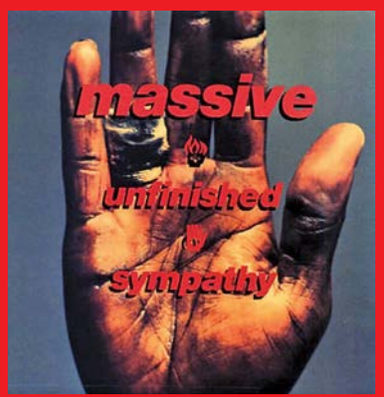
"It's always been the same, music," 3D said in a 1991 interview in *Select* magazine. "It's never been any different. If you listened to a stack of LPs from every era, it would all sound the same to you. And that applies to everything, from rock to indie, house to hip-hop, or even jazz, sometimes… Dance music and indie music are the two worst in those fields. Obviously, you get wicked things coming through, but on the whole, it's really bland, really mediocre.

"It's like that film *Amadeus*, when Salieri says, 'I'm the King Of The Mediocre'. That's what he had resigned himself to and that's what I think most music is at the moment. Everyone is content to be mediocre."

Unfinished name? Why *Unfinished Sympathy* is by Massive

Blue Lines **was released briefly in a sleeve just reading 'Massive', not Massive Attack, on the advice of Cameron McVey. The BBC's 1991 blacklist of songs during the Gulf War was very real – if somewhat laughable. Among the banned songs were *Boom Bang-A-Bang* by Lulu and even Eurovision winner *A Little Peace* by German teenager Nicole. Inexplicably, The Clash's *Rock The Casbah* was not banned. But seeing as ABBA's *Under Attack* was also on the blacklist for that one word, McVey decided to take no chances with his own charges. The worry of a Massive Attack radio ban was real, remembered 3D, "because of the association with the tabloid catchphrase 'a massive attack on Iraq!', which was horrible." Quite simply, there was too much investment riding on *Blue Lines* for potential hits to be blacklisted.**

As a result, all copies of *Unfinished Sympathy* are also by Massive. The sleeve art was Gulf War-related: the hand motif (a favourite of 3D, see also the single *Protection* and the boxset *Singles 90/98*) is bandaged and smeared in oil, referencing what Del Naja saw as the root political cause of the Gulf War. His image is unrelated to the song.



On early 1991 pressings of *Blue Lines* (Circa Records/Wild Bunch WBRLP 1), some came with just 'Massive' as the artist title, and likewise on the inner-sleeve credits and label. Some also came with an outer card sleeve with just 'Massive' on. The 2012 'Mix/Master' Deluxe boxset splits the album over two 180g vinyl LPs, plus CD, DVD with 96K/24-bit high-res audio files, and a repro of the original 24-inchx18-inch *Blue Lines* promo poster.

CHERRY AID

Neneh Cherry, and the people around her, had a bigger influence on the making of *Blue Lines* than many at first realised. She'd known The Wild Bunch for a few years, and her media connections helped get The Wild Bunch soundsystem onto a tour of Japan in 1986 to be covered by style bible *The Face*. Cherry's producer (and soon-to-be husband) was Cameron McVey, who'd go on to become Massive Attack's manager. Cherry had debuted on a 1986 'hip house' single by duo Morgan/McVey on the B-side *Looking Good Diving With The Wild Bunch*… produced by none other than Stock Aitken Waterman, on PWL.

The songs

Core personnel, Massive Attack *Robert '3D' Del Naja; Grantley 'Daddy G' Marshall; Andrew 'Mushroom' Vowles. See individual tracks for vocals*
Produced by *Massive Attack with Jonny Dollar*
Recorded at *Coach House Studio, Bristol (CH), Cherry Bear Studios, London (CB), Eastcote Studios, London (E), Hot Nights, London (HN), Abbey Road, London (AR). See individual tracks*

1 *SAFE FROM HARM*

Featured vocalist Shara Nelson
Notable samples *Stratus* by Billy Cobham (drums, bass, keyboards); *Good Old Music* by Funkadelic (intro drums); *Streetfight* by David Essex (lyrics)
Recorded at CH

One of the first four songs produced for *Blue Lines* (alongside *Be Thankful For What You've Got*, *Lately* and the not-included *Any Love*) and the first recorded with singer Shara Nelson. 3D favoured it, as he felt the other three songs were rather too retro and soft. Nelson's opening words of "Midnight rockers/ City slickers/ Gunmen /And maniacs" and its 'stalking' black and white video set in a derelict London towerblock set the album's unnerving, claustrophobic tone. Perhaps more so than any other Massive Attack chart hit, *Safe From Harm* owes a major debt to its primary sample, from Billy Cobham's *Stratus* from his 1973 fusion album, *Spectrum*. The sample idea was Mushroom's. 3D's "I was lookin' back to see if you were lookin' back at me to see me lookin' back at you" lyric is lifted from David Essex's *Streetfight*, from 1973 album, *Rock On*.

2 *ONE LOVE*

Featured vocalist Horace Andy
Notable samples *You Know You Know* by Mahavishnu Orchestra (looped piano/rhythm section); *Ike's Mood I* by Isaac Hayes (horns, guitar and piano at outro)
Recorded at CH

Blue Lines' second track turns a meditative two-second piano lick from the Mahavishnu Orchestra plus some select Isaac Hayes into a crawling reggae mantra. Again, it sounds somehow threatening, even though Horace Andy's lyrics are a hymn to monogamy. The Jamaican singer has been the only outside vocalist to be featured on all Massive Attack albums.

3 *BLUE LINES*

Additional vocalist Tricky
Notable sample *Sneakin' In The Back* by Tom Scott And The LA Express (most of the track); *Rock Creek Park* by The Blackbyrds (guitar lick)
Additional musicians Paul Johnson (bass)
Recorded at E

One the most straightforward hip-hop cuts on *Blue Lines*, the title track is rapped over a well-used 1974 break by Tom Scott And The LA Express (although the funk-fusion band are not credited). Neither are The Blackbyrds. Primarily a duet of 3D and Tricky, with some bizarre lyrical references: "(Take a walk) Billy, don't be a hero", "(Excommunicated

The songs *continued*

from) the brotherhood of man", the "sound of silence" and "walking on sunshine" could again all be pop references from Del Naja's youth. 3D also references his graffiti days, which he largely gave up when Massive Attack started (or then again, maybe he didn't, if you're a Banksy conspiracy theorist).

4 *BE THANKFUL FOR WHAT YOU'VE GOT*

Featured vocalist Tony Bryan
Notable sample *Be Thankful For What You've Got* by William DeVaughn (looped)
Recorded at *CB*

It was Daddy G's idea to cover this 1974 R&B tune, by one-hit wonder William DeVaughn. Tony Bryan, who appeared on Massive Attack's pre-album 1990 single *Any Love*, returned to sing. The track was remixed for US release, by Chris Stokes and Cyrus Melchor of New Jack Swing trio Immature, but never commercially released. 3D thought the soul cover was a bit too straightforward, musically, for Massive Attack, but felt an affinity for the lyric.

"It's a sentiment for the 90s," D told *NME*. "What's the point in killing people for their Nikes? We're living in a time where nobody can be satisfied with what they've got because of the media. You're bombarded with stuff to desire all the time."

5 *FIVE MAN ARMY*

Featured vocalists Horace Andy, Tricky, Claude 'Willie Wee' Williams
Notable samples *Five Man Dubb* produced by Lewin Bones Lock (bass, drums, guitar loop); *I'm Glad You're Mine* by Al Green (intro drum break)
Recorded at E

Blue Lines' biggest dub track. Based on the 12" dub mix (by Lewin Bones Lock) of *Five Man Army* (1982) featuring Dillinger, Wayne Wade, Trinity, Al Campbell and Junior Tamlin. With Andy, Tricky and Williams, there are also five vocals on Massive's track. (*Un Esercito Di 5 Uomini*, or *The Five Man Army*, was also a Spaghetti Western from 1969, but speculation that it was a favourite in the Anglo-Italian Del Naja household is, indeed, speculation!). The 1972 Al Green drum lick was sampled around the same time by Eric B & Rakim on *Mahogany* (1990). G references the Wild Bunch tour of Japan and it closes with Horace Andy reprising *Money Money* and the title track of his 1969 Studio One debut LP, *Skylarking*.

6 *UNFINISHED SYMPATHY*

Featured vocalist Shara Nelson
Additional musicians Strings arranged and conducted by Will Malone
Notable samples *Planetary Citizen* by Mahavishnu Orchestra (the "hey hey hey hey"); *Take Me To The Mardi Gras* by Bob James (drums, bells); *Parade Strut* by JJ Johnson (drums); *Flowers Of The Sea* by Era (piano)
Recorded at CH, AR

Blue Lines' most ambitious recording and its biggest hit (No. 13 in the UK, No. 1 in Holland), Nelson was responsible for the words and vocal melody: "We were working on a track called *It Will Rain*, and bits of this other melody came into my mind," she told *Spin*. "I couldn't shake it, so I took a break from recording, had a cup of tea, and stood in the corner and started singing it to myself to see if I could piece it together."

The strings were the idea of co-producer Jonny Dollar, who first played a synthesised version, then brought in a 40-piece string section conducted by string arranger Will Malone (who had also worked on Neneh Cherry's *Raw Like Sushi*) and finally, they were recorded at Abbey Road Studios in London.

Strangely, the song has no bassline on it, instead using the orchestra's double basses and the propulsion of the gradually unfurling string arrangement. "There's lots of chord extensions, a slight jazz air, the kind of chords that Gil Evans might use with Miles Davis," Malone later explained. "It starts to become more of a jazz groove, but on strings."

3D later recalled: "It was an exercise in deconstruction, as opposed to an experience in building this beautiful song. It was a song that came with verse-bridge-chorus, these three classic songwriting structures, and we ended up taking half that out, leaving the chorus out and leaving a big space behind, and getting Will Malone to score the strings and build this giant swell of music, because it suddenly had space to build a string arrangement where you wouldn't have that in a song normally. This is what gave the song its expanse."

Ironically, Mushroom later complained of Nellee Hooper's remix of *Unfinished Sympathy*, saying, somewhat ironically: "You don't hear of people remixing Led Zeppelin or the Mahavishnu Orchestra." But maybe Mushroom's memories of *Unfinished Sympathy* have never been all that fond? While still being largely bankrolled by McVey/Cherry's Cherry Bear Organisation, Massive hadn't budgeted to pay the bills of the 40-piece orchestra at Abbey Road. To raise funds, Mushroom had to sell his Mitsubishi Shogun.

7 *DAYDREAMING*

Featured vocalists *Shara Nelson, Tricky*
Notable sample (it's basically the whole track) *Mambo by Wally Badarou*
Recorded at *CB*

The demo of *Daydreaming* was what got Massive Attack signed to Circa Records (also Neneh Cherry's label) and was released as a single in 1990. The lyrics are 3D and Tricky fusing lyrical ideas on past house parties, drugs and 1980s urban life.

Of the looped sample, from his 1984 LP *Echoes*, Wally Badarou (of Island Records' Compass Point All Stars, and also sometimes known as Level 42's 'fifth member') said: "It was done with my negotiated consent, I got properly credited, so I can't see that it could ever be a rip-off. Given the magnitude of their success afterwards, it sure looks like something one can only be proud to be a part of."

8 *LATELY*

Featured vocalists Shara Nelson, Tricky
Notable samples *Mellow Mellow Right On* by Lowrell (rhythm track, synth bass); *Joy* by Isaac Hayes
Recorded at CH

Another track with the main sample dominating the music, but another with Mushroom's DJing skills for beat-matching and scratching to the fore. Lowrell's *Mellow Mellow Right On* hit No. 37 in the UK charts on its release in 1979. The lyrics and vocal melody are by Nelson.

9 *HYMN OF THE BIG WHEEL*

Featured vocalist Horace Andy
Additional vocals Neneh Cherry, Michael 'Mikey General' Taylor
Recorded at CH, HN

Neneh Cherry co-wrote this track largely with 3D: they'd worked together on her *Manchild* single. She's credited with co-arrangement. 3D told *NME* in 1991 that it "does build a bigger picture than the rest of the tracks on *Blue Lines*, because the rest are kind of unfocused – they just drift around and round in their own way, which is what we're into, rather than paint an obvious picture or leave a message. We're as worried about things like pollution as everyone else, it's just we don't want to write about it so obviously.

"We ain't got no solutions to the problems, we're just the same as everyone else, living it… It's just a story about a man talking to his son, talking about the future or what's gonna happen, what's it all about? Just questions, y'know? We don't offer alternatives like solar power, or anything like that."

Avalon

Blurred lines: Massive Attack in a publicity shot around the time of their debut's release

With its hip-hop beats meshing with mournful strings, Neneh Cherry's Manchild could be a proto-Blue Lines track

Cherry scored a solo deal, with McVey co-producing, Mushroom is credited with programming on three tracks of her genre-hopping debut LP of 1989, *Raw Like Sushi*, and appears on decks and keys in the video for *Buffalo Stance*: ("Looking good/ Hangin' with The Wild Bunch"). 3D was also onboard, co-writing the follow-up single *Manchild*, and with its hip-hop beats meshing with mournful strings, *Manchild* even sounds like something that could be a proto-*Blue Lines* track.

The Wild Bunch had released their own tracks: notably a single for Island/4th & Broadway called *Friends And Countrymen*, with Shara Nelson on the B-side for a cover of Bacharach/David song *The Look Of Love* (inspired by Isaac Hayes' version). But this was The Wild Bunch with Milo and Nellee Hooper still involved, before the latter jumped for Soul II Soul's *Club Classics Vol. One* (1989).

As 3D, Daddy G and Mushroom morphed into Massive Attack to record themselves, they were partly bankrolled by Neneh and McVey (aka Booga Bear)'s Cherry Bear Organisation. For early Massive, there's a short film and track (now on YouTube) from 1990, called *Just A Matter Of Time*, that's worth a look.

The 1990 to 1991 studio sessions for *Blue Lines* were split mostly between Bristol's Coach House Studio and Cherry Bear Studios, which was in reality Cherry and McVey's London flat. Things didn't always run sweetly, and Massive ended up calling Cherry Bear "the Poo Room". Mushroom later explained its pungent smell was due to the couple's new child: "One of the nappies that belonged to Tyson, Neneh Cherry's kid, got trapped in the air vent. Then they went away for the summer and we

Getty

Massive Attack performing in July 2006 at Westonbirt Arboretum

Take 1: The *Unfinished Sympathy* promo

Shara Nelson stars in *Unfinished Sympathy*'s iconic promo, shot in January 1991 on West Pico Boulevard in Mid-City, Los Angeles. It's the first example of a one-take music video.

Daddy G (as a daddy), 3D and then Mushroom join the shoot, but in the background. Many others in the video were just residents going about their daily business.

The video was directed by Baillie Walsh, who Massive also used for *Daydreaming, Safe From Harm, Karmacoma* and more. They'd originally liked his video for Boy George's *Generations Of Love* (1990, released under the guise of *Jesus Loves You*).

Walsh remembers the shoot's scheduling as "scary": "I didn't have a big budget; I was shooting alone in winter, in a place where it gets dark at 5pm. I still hadn't shot anything by one o'clock!"

There was a single cameraman with a then-heavy Steadicam. Walsh recalled how the cameraman "collapsed halfway down the street, on the first take", so he had to simplify his direction. His original idea of the camera ascending on a crane at the end, to show an overview of the streets, was abandoned. Instead, the video simply faded out.

The 'street walking' scenario was intentionally copied by director Walter Stern for The Verve's *Bitter Sweet Symphony* (1997). Stern also directed *Risingson, Teardrop* and *Angel* for Massive Attack. More coincidence? Will Malone was strings arranger on *Unfinished Sympathy* and *Bitter Sweet Symphony*.

Massive Attack in 1991 (l to r): Grantley 'Daddy G' Marshall, Robert '3D' Del Naja, Andrew 'Mushroom' Vowles and Shara Nelson

were left to work with this terrible smell. So I guess we've got less of a romantic memory of that album than everyone else."

Nevertheless, a sound was clearly coalescing. Daddy G reflected of the era's dance scene: "It was all about going out and getting pilled up. We were like; let's make some anti-dance music, something that you can sit and listen to… There wasn't any relaxing music going on at the time, it was all quite hype and a bit heavily drug induced. I think people got bored with that and they wanted to make more experimental music."

Many fans of *Blue Lines* didn't (or don't) realise just how much of it was heavily sampled and looped from previous artists' tracks. The album credits were very 'meagre': some composers of the original tracks received co-writing credits, but individual source tracks aren't mentioned on the sleeve. Others – even Mahavishnu Orchestra – only make an 'Inspired by' list. The only outside instrumentalist credited is bassist Paul Johnson. Yet that was simply hip-hop's MO at the time. Only insiders would've known Massive Attack's equipment cache was little more than an Ensoniq EPS sampling synth, a Yamaha drum machine, a Numark mixer and their DJ decks.

Daddy G explained later that *Blue Lines* was "completely from a DJ perspective. We're gonna make a record of our favourite sounds and influences and it was quite heavily sample-based. It was quite imaginative the way we did something with it." As 3D said of opener *Safe From Harm*: "Working with a sample like that, you can't go wrong. Even as a loop with no vocals in it, as soon as you loop that up and listen to it, you're going, 'Yeah'. It just has a total groove."

BREAKING WITH TRADITION

On its April 1991 release, an effervescent *NME* review wrote that: "After *Blue Lines*, the boundaries separating soul, funk, reggae, house, classical, hip-hop and space-rock will be blurred forever." 21 years on,

Avalon

Pitchfork concurred, comparing listening to *Blue Lines* to "reading an old William Gibson novel that describes the then-near future, which is now the present, with unsettling precision. Nearly every song offers a sound currently in use in music's taste-making leading edge."

The influence of *Blue Lines* was, indeed, massive. Its success shone a light on Portishead (whose Geoff Barrow worked as a mix intern on *Blue Lines*), and the slew of artists in its wake – Morcheeba, Sneaker Pimps and more. Moby, Leftfield, DJ Shadow, Björk, Groove Armada and Nightmares On Wax were clearly listening hard. Jamie xx seems to still be listening right now.

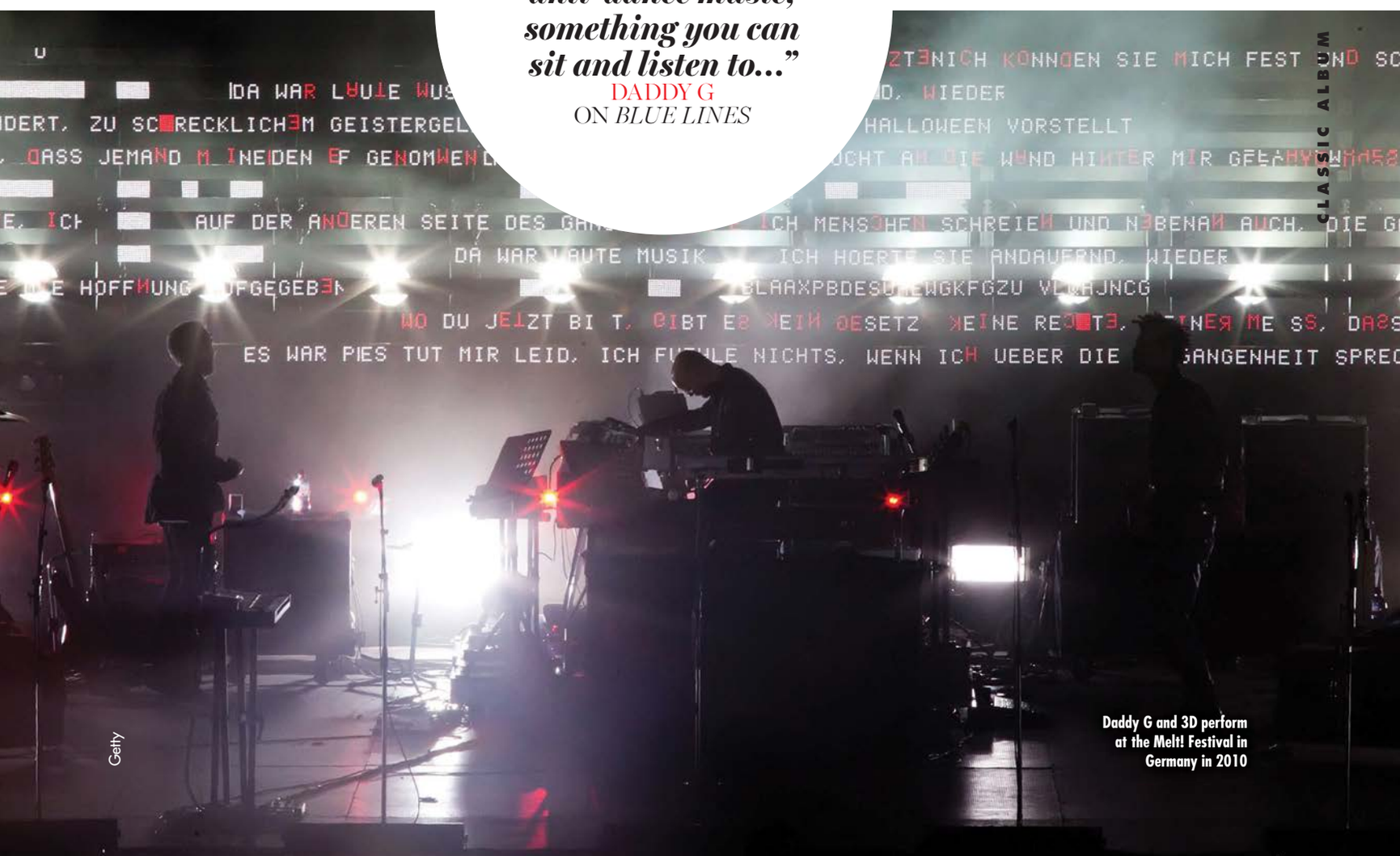
The notion of a 'core' production team with ever-revolving guest vocalists was also soon a norm… Gorillaz have picked up the template. While it's rightly seen as one of the 90s' most pioneering albums, the real strength of *Blue Lines* is its timelessness. It still sounds 'new': like the 21st century a decade early.

Massive Attack as an idea has evolved; more live instruments, darker textures, even less danceable, even more menacing… even though, at times, the 'group' has been 3D alone. But it's arguable that they were never stronger than on this bolt-from-the-blue debut. It's angsty, it's gloomy, yet it's also downright beautiful and remains an essential album.

"Massive Attack and *Blue Lines* are part of the UK's musical DNA," says Labrinth (Timothy McKenzie), the fêted English producer/singer/rapper/multi-instrumentalist. "The group have had a huge influence on UK production. They've influenced music around the world, of course, but the UK more than anywhere."

Even Massive Attack's Daddy G, not usually prone to bragging, concurs that *Blue Lines* was a masterstroke. "I think it's our freshest album. We were at our strongest then." ●

"We were like, let's make some anti-dance music, something you can sit and listen to…"
DADDY G
ON *BLUE LINES*



Getty

Daddy G and 3D perform at the Melt! Festival in Germany in 2010

VINYL

Modern Harmonic is the newest star in the Sundazed solar system. **Randy Fox** sets the controls for the heart of this cosmic Nashville label...

FRONTIER

Bob Irwin and Jay Millar are sitting in the Nashville office of Sundazed Music, in the historic RCA Studio A office building on Music Row. They're discussing the company's newest imprint, Modern Harmonic, and the label's flagship releases by the late jazz composer, bandleader and self-proclaimed interplanetary traveller, Sun Ra.

"A lot of Sun Ra's original albums feature studio cuts and live material drawn from several different years," A&R/label manager Millar says. "He often assembled albums based on how tracks fit together, rather than when they were recorded. That's what we did on our release *Thunder Of The Gods*. Working closely with the Sun Ra estate, we found unreleased material from the *Universe Is Blue* album and from *Strange Strings*. If you look at those tracks as part of the album they were recorded for, they don't seem to work, but brought together and packaged with great artwork, it's like they were meant to be. It's technically a compilation, but it's really a new Sun Ra album."

"That's more thinking about a record than just about any other company puts into a release," Sundazed president and owner Irwin adds, emphatically.

Attention to big concepts and small details has been a hallmark of Sundazed Music since the company's founding in 1989. Based in Irwin's hometown, Coxsackie, New York, Sundazed built a reputation for top-quality reissues of both renowned superstars and obscure cult artists. Above all, Sundazed demonstrated a fealty to vinyl records, even during the format's darkest days.

"When we went into business, it was exactly at the time that the major labels were killing off vinyl," Irwin says. "We had the mindset that we were going to make vinyl, CDs and even cassettes where appropriate. Since we were in a sea of companies deleting vinyl, we were very deliberate in our choices. In the beginning, about 50 per cent of our releases came out on vinyl and we always sold through on the vinyl editions. If we pressed 1,000 copies of an album, in a month or two, we would sell out."

SUN 'N' SURF

In the late 1980s, Irwin managed a chain of deep-catalogue record stores in upstate New York. A collector and recording engineer, he also worked on a freelance basis locating and transferring master tapes for California-based reissue label Rhino Records. His background gave him a unique combined perspective as a collector, sound engineer and retailer.

"I located some master tapes of The Knickerbockers and The Five Americans for Rhino," Irwin says. "Richard Foos [Rhino Records co-founder] offered to pay me for my work, but told me they'd probably never put them out because they were starting to reissue the catalogues of more well-known artists. He suggested I use them to start my own reissue label and was very supportive."

Starting with an emphasis on 60s garage rock, surf and psychedelic rock, Sundazed expanded to include soul, jazz, country and other genres. While their financial success was initially based in the 90s CD reissue boom, the label never wavered from vinyl.

Left: Jay and Bob at the label's Nashville offices, inside the historic RCA Studio A building on Music Row (above)

"In 1998, we started a vinyl-only subsidiary called BeatRocket," Irwin says. "We acquired certain albums, like *Introducing The Sonics* and *The Best Of The Sir Douglas Quintet* and, at first, only issued them on vinyl, just to see what would happen. We sold 2,500 copies and people wanted more. That was the trigger for Sundazed to get really aggressive in vinyl licensing."

Irwin soon found the hardest part of licensing the rights for vinyl reissues from major labels in the early 2000s was convincing them he was serious.

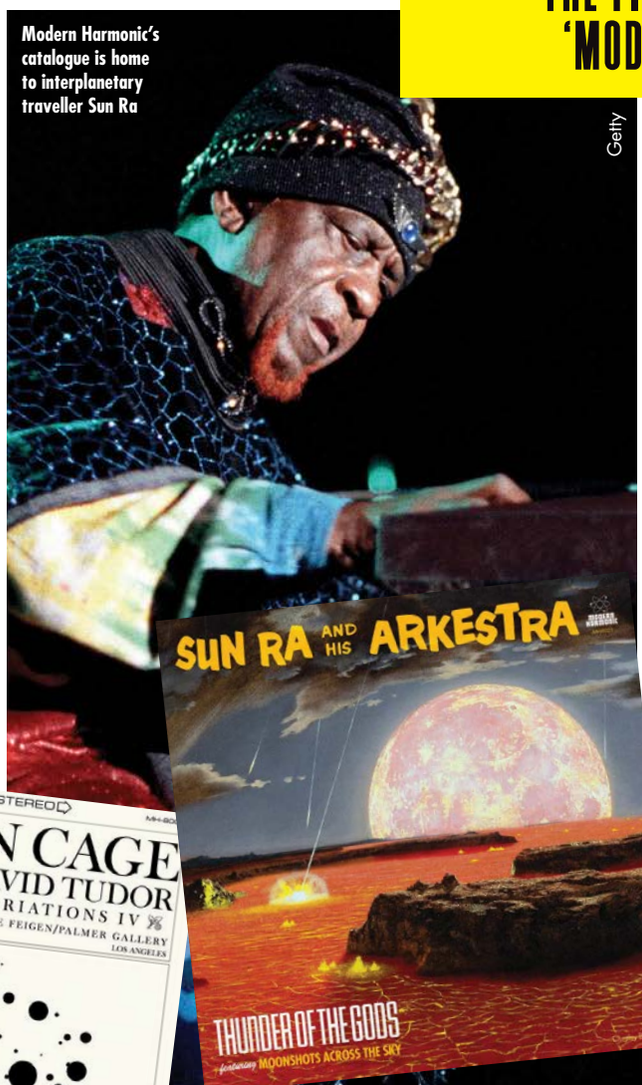
"When I first went to Sony, Warner Brothers and Universal and told them I wanted to reissue albums on vinyl, in mono, I was laughed out of the room. They all told me I was crazy. I persisted, and right out of the gate, there were several home runs – Bob Dylan, Otis Redding, The Byrds, The Stooges, the MC5 – many of which are still in our catalogue today. Eventually, other people started becoming aware and got into the game, not realising that the reason our vinyl programme was successful was because we weren't paying Manhattan rent. We had a staff that could all fit into a Dodge Caravan, and all of them were into the music and were devoted to what we're doing."

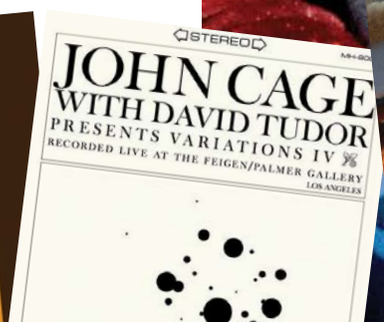
SONGS OF THE SOUTH

Over the last 15 years, Sundazed has secured its position as one of the premier vinyl reissue labels in the world, with over 600 releases, including 12" LPs, 10" EPs and 45s. For all Sundazed releases, every effort is made to source from the original analogue masters or high-definition digital transfers, with Irwin supervising the process. They use only the best pressing plants, and every Sundazed release has top-quality graphics and packaging.

Modern Harmonic's catalogue is home to interplanetary traveller Sun Ra

Getty





Despite offers from various entities, Sundazed has remained fiercely independent and still maintains its primary offices and warehouse in two historic buildings in downtown Coxsackie, plus a large warehouse in another part of the village. Sundazed's New York headquarters is home to seven employees and features in-house mastering and mixing studios and an analogue master tape library. Although Irwin and his wife Mary have no plans to move their business, in 2008, the couple purchased a home in the small, rural community of Leiper's Fork, Tennessee, just south of Nashville.

"I had been coming down to Nashville for two decades to negotiate licensing agreements and to acquire master tapes," Irwin says, "and I'd developed some very good relationships. We thought it would be our winter home, but after we got here, we wondered if we could run the business from Tennessee. We gave it a trial run and realised we were able to see parts of the business more clearly than we did being in the middle of it every day. I built a studio at home so I could do the transfers and mastering work in Leiper's Fork."

"I FOUND A 1930S BOOK ON MODERN RECORDING TECHNIQUES. THE TITLE OF THE FIRST CHAPTER WAS 'MODERN HARMONIC'"

One of the relationships Irwin built in Nashville was with Jay Millar, marketing director for the Nashville-based United Record Pressing. In June 2015, Millar mentioned he was looking for new opportunities and a new Sundazed chapter began.

"I had become friends with Jay and I knew his musical tastes and mine overlapped in several areas," Irwin says. "After just a few meetings, it was clear we should bring him onboard and open an office in Nashville. At the same

MODERN HARMONIC TOP FIVE

Jay Millar offers his favourites from the label's unusual and unique collection of releases – so far…

Love Is A Drag
For Adult Listeners Only
MH-8017 – 2016
"Picture a breezy West Coast vocal-jazz album in the vein of Chet Baker, but these love songs are courting a male suitor! Way before its time and beautiful."

Tak Shindo
Mganga!
MH-8019 – 2016
"An example of how great an all-analogue experience can be. A rare 1958 stereo marvel of lush exotica arrangements and jungle beats."

Sun Ra And His Arkestra
Thunder Of The Gods
NH-8021 – 2016
"A crazy and chaotic journey that took 50 years to hit the record bins! Outtakes from 1966's *Strange Strings* and 1972's *Universe In Blue*."

Margo Guryan
29 Demos
MH-8023 – 2016
"Honey-voiced sweetness, like the prototype for Belle & Sebastian. Dare I say these demos are superior to her sole LP, *Take A Picture*."

Dennis The Fox
Mother Trucker
MH-8025 – 2017
"Gritty, powerful and strange. A super-rare private pressing that gets you pumped up. Very eclectic and hard to pigeon-hole."

time, my friend Aubrey Preston had just purchased the historic RCA Studio A building on Music Row, saving it from demolition by a real-estate developer. I asked him if he had any office space for rent, he did and we moved in just down the hall from Chet Atkins' original office."

SPACE PROGRAMME

With a new employee and a new office, it became apparent it was the perfect opportunity to expand Sundazed into different musical areas, while maintaining the same dedication to quality vinyl reissues. "The best way we could think of teaching Jay the ropes of how we run Sundazed was to start a new imprint," Irwin says. "We both had ideas and areas of interest that we could have shoved under the Sundazed umbrella, but a new enterprise felt right at that moment. It all came together. I found a book on modern music-recording techniques from the 1930s and the first chapter in it was called 'Modern Harmonic'. It felt right and appropriate for the kind of music we wanted to release. A week later, we had a logo, and we were on our way."

Just as Sundazed's first releases of garage and surf music set the tone for the label, Modern Harmonic soon had its own musical cornerstone, too, in the form of the extensive back catalogue of Sun Ra recordings. "Sun Ra's estate had approached Bob about licensing their catalogue shortly before I joined Sundazed," Millar recalls. "As we began putting the idea of Modern Harmonic together, our access to the Sun Ra catalogue helped to shape the vision of what that label should be."

"Could we have put Sun Ra on Sundazed?" Irwin muses. "I guess we could, but would it be as effective as having it on a label that concentrates on the avant-garde and the unusual? I had learned a lesson from the several half-hearted attempts at trying to release jazz titles on Sundazed. They didn't quite work. We got letters from people saying, 'I thought this was a surf album!' and jazz fans were hesitant to buy our releases, because they looked at us as a garage-rock label."

"When we launched Modern Harmonic, we had a rough outline of what we wanted, but

"RIGHT NOW, I CONSIDER MODERN HARMONIC TO BE DIVIDED INTO TWO GENRES – INTERPLANETARY AND TERRESTRIAL"

ultimately the music defines the label," Millar says. "Right now, I consider Modern Harmonic to be divided into two genres – interplanetary and terrestrial. It wasn't intentional, but because of Sun Ra, we ended up with a lot of records with a space theme. Then we have several oddball releases that are not interplanetary in any way, but our thinking is, if you love the uniqueness of Sun Ra, you're probably going to love this, too.

"Also, every Modern Harmonic release comes with a story, a great, insane story in a lot of cases. Every title we've released so far is something you'll listen to and love, but when you know the story behind the record, you're going to love it even more."

ECLECTIC ORBIT

A few examples of the wide variety of Modern Harmonic releases include *Man In Space With Sounds* – a commemorative album of the 1962 Seattle Century 21 Exposition World's Fair, featuring unearthly music envisioned and conducted by Attilio 'Art' Mineo, combined with out-of-this-world narration; *Texas Oil Patch Songs* by Slim Willet – a super-obscure 1959 country music concept album of big rigs and the men who drill for black gold and *Mother Trucker* by Dennis The Fox – a privately pressed 1970 album featuring a wild mash-up of country, funk and rock that's become a cult favourite, with original copies commanding prices as high as $600. Then there's *Folk Songs For The 21st Century* – a 1960 time capsule of atomic-age country and radioactive rockabilly by Hollywood character actor and musician Sheldon Allman, featuring the song *Crawl Out Through The Fallout*, popularised by the award-winning computer game *Fallout 4*.

In addition to more oddities and unusual titles, Modern Harmonic plan to continue their exploration of the Sun Ra catalogue with new compilations of previously unreleased studio recordings, live material and straight reissues of classic titles.

"We're licensed a good year-and-a-half out in front of ourselves," Irwin says. "It's not a matter of what we're going to do next, it's where do we put it all? To launch Modern Harmonic, we wanted releases that would be profitable right out of the gate. We wanted to make deals that worked on every level and not be tempted by high-profile projects that might never end up in the black. Now we're ready to bend that rule a bit. We have some upcoming major-label projects that are very exciting, but we're doing them now that the brand has legs to stand on."

Common-sense principles guided Sundazed's success, and the same formula is repeating with Modern Harmonic. According to Irwin, the road to record success is just a matter of sticking to the basics.

"You can create an impressive release with scholarly liner notes and great packaging, but the bottom line is, is the record fun to listen to?" he says. "That's the most important thing. All I ever wanted to do was make great records that are fun and that people want to listen to. The success of that idea is evidenced by the fact we're in our 29th year and we're still going strong." ●

Sundazed has had huge success with reissues of the likes of MC5, pictured here playing in Mount Clemens, Michigan in 1969

Getty

Below: Some of the label's more earthly delights, ranging from jazz odysseys to country concept albums

Choice Cuts #3

JOY DIVISION
AN IDEAL FOR LIVING

1,000-COPY LIMITED-EDITION EP

When Joy Division released their debut EP in 1978, no one could've predicted the impact the Manchester band would have. Because of this, *An Ideal For Living* has become one of the most collectable records ever

WAX FACTS
Joy Division
An Ideal For Living
Limited 1,000-copy EP
Year **1978**
Format **7" black vinyl**
£495

Released on Enigma, the band's own label, with only 1,000 copies pressed, the back story behind Joy Division's debut makes it all the more alluring.

The four-panel sleeve is printed on heavy card stock; the copies are said to have been hand-folded by the band. The sleeve also generated controversy due to its Hitler Youth image (drawn by Bernard Sumner) and, along with their name, led people to believe the band had Nazi sympathies. That's not true, of course, but it got people talking about Joy Division regardless.

The recording of the EP is primitive, but gives the four tracks a sense of raw punk urgency. It's a world away from the layers of haunting post-punk sound that would pepper their later output, but shows the roots of Joy Division at their best. *An Ideal For Living* was re-pressed as a 12" later the same year to enhance the sound quality, but not by much.

The record has been heavily counterfeited over the years. Some are better than others, but most are on poor-quality coloured vinyl and have thin sleeves. The way to tell an original black-vinyl copy is by the anti-slip ring on the centre label of the 7", which only genuine 1978 pressings have. Of course, the band ended in tragedy, with the suicide of Ian Curtis in 1980 – but *An Ideal For Living* was a humble start for a band whose legacy is still felt today. ***Glen Bushell***

THE ESSENTIAL

The Rolling Stones

Rock 'n' roll's ultimate survivors are now well into their sixth decade together. **Rik Flynn** sifts through their peerless back catalogue to present the definitive Stones listening guide…

Raw, rebellious and as fearless now as they ever were, The Rolling Stones are, for many, the greatest band in history. They celebrated their 50th anniversary in 2012, stormed Glastonbury and Hyde Park the following year, toured relentlessly the year after that – despite the tragic suicide of Mick Jagger's longtime girlfriend L'Wren Scott – and have since showed zero signs of letting up, with yet another No. 1 album, *Blue & Lonesome*, released last year. They may be in their twilight years, but there's no denying Mick, Keef and co still embody the essence of rock 'n' roll, albeit with a few more organic smoothies, a wholegrain diet and a stringent fitness regime to keep them in shape.

Put together a list of the finer moments evoked by the band across their half-century tenure at the top, and it's instantly apparent just how many incredible songs this British institution has managed to assemble – and just how many of those irrefutably classic tunes are burnt into our collective memory banks. We assure you, it's many more than you realise.

From their formation in the 60s, the band initially soaked in the blues being drip-fed from across the pond. As they grew into one of rock's shapeshifting giants, they strove to incorporate a vast spread of styles into their own sound, from their bread and butter in blues and rock 'n' roll through to soul, country, gospel, pop – and even disco. Listen across their back catalogue and you can piece together how the band created a distinct brew that's entirely their own. Mick Jagger and Keith Richards were – and still are – a songwriting force to be reckoned with.

While the Stones naturally translated those visceral 12-bars they loved so much into a newer, more accessible strain, their songs have always remained respectful to their origins. Perhaps therein lies their secret. This newfangled translation, moulded by a group of London wannabes, maintained the backbone, maintained the intention – and above all, maintained the vitality held in the grooves of those 45s that they held in such high regard.

Listen to their latest album, shot through with Jagger's stinging harp and vocals, Keef and Wood's weaving interplay and Watts' loping Chicago backbeats, and it's clear the same blue flame is still burning bright. So here, we offer up our Top 40 songs – not the single releases or the obscure rarities, just what we consider to be the best tunes – from the sprawling archives of rock 'n' roll's eternal outsiders…

40 ANGIE
1973

Following up *Exile On Main St.* was never going to be an easy job and 1973's brooding *Goat's Head Soup* did nothing to appease the critics. For a start, introducing the album via a piece of moody, down-tempo balladry was a risky move – at least their label thought so – but undeterred, the Stones took *Angie* straight to the summit of the US hit parade. The band's swaying, dynamic instrumentation – coupled with one of Jagger's most heavy-hearted and downtrodden, emotional performances at the mic – made for a twilight classic.

39 SHATTERED
1978

A highlight of the *Some Girls* LP and a US 7", this New York confessional sketches out a murky portrait of the truth behind the shop front, to the sound of Keith's looping, open-ended riff. Centred around Jagger's stream-of-consciousness patter, this near-spoken-word narration of "Love and hope and sex and dreams" leaves a bitter taste. "Go ahead, bite the Big Apple, don't mind the maggots…" drawls Mick, as the groove revolves and Ronnie Wood (who also played bass) shows off his vocab of rock 'n' roll licks.

38 CHILD OF THE MOON
1968

Reportedly Jagger's love letter to Marianne Faithfull, and with a drunken psychedelia aped by a thousand bands since, this killer bee served up a hypnotic cabala that made it the ideal counterpoint to the driving rock of the A-side, *Jumpin' Jack Flash*. While it was recorded during the *Beggars Banquet* sessions, *Child Of The Moon* hadn't quite shaken the spell cast over the band by their previous LP, *Their Satanic Majesties Request*. With its despondent faces and anxiety in the air, the video did little to settle the nerves, either…

36 HAVE YOU SEEN YOUR MOTHER, BABY, STANDING IN THE SHADOW?
1966

This high-velocity stomp may be a curious kink in their catalogue, but it offers cheap thrills aplenty. From the opening brass blasts, via its slapdash arrangement, to the almost nonsensical lyrics, this appeared in a crowded run of singles, all top-class and all celebrating a carefree disparity. With the band in drag on the sleeve (outfits they supposedly kept on to hit the bars of New York), it's engineered to both shock and amuse in equal measure.

34 WE LOVE YOU
1967

Rumours of that caustic rivalry with a certain Liverpudlian four-piece were firmly put to bed by this thundering, psychedelic piano-led charge. Not only did Lennon and McCartney feature on backing vocals, but (unsurprisingly) this tripped-out composition sounded exactly like a Beatles-Stones mash-up – with Brian Jones acting as its overseer. Cut during the sessions for *Their Satanic Majesties Request*, but issued as a single some months earlier, *We Love You* is pure Englishness, with a streak of pop-psychedelic eccentricity.

37 RIP THIS JOINT
1972

This foot-down jump-blues-inspired rocker takes us on a whistle-stop tour of the States – and at just over two minutes, it's a rip-roaring ride. Passing references to R&B king Larry Williams and infamous Texan groupie 'Barbara The Butter Queen' (don't ask!), plus those white-hot sax breaks from Bobby Keys, mean Jagger's slurs of "Round and round and round we go" make it nigh-on impossible not to jump on board – although Richards later said that Mick wasn't a huge fan of the song, because "it was too fast".

35 SHINE A LIGHT
1972

While not written in the wake of Brian Jones's tragic death, as many believe – Jagger had apparently composed a version of the song around a year before – this is soulful, gospel blues at its most potent. Jagger's lead line veers from verses stricken with inconsolable anguish, to triumphal choruses that offer passage from the loneliness. In the meantime, Nellcôte's supporting throng splice together a lush, beaten-up ambience, for another one of many masterstrokes conjured during the *Exile On Main St.* sessions.

33 MISS YOU
1978

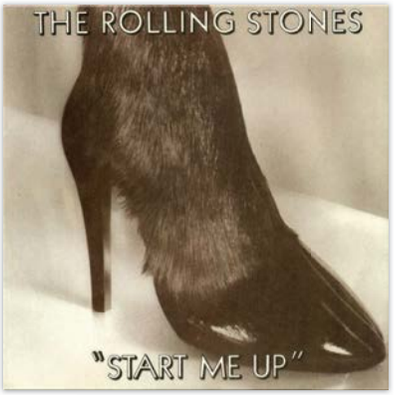
When the Stones dared set foot in the disco arena, it wasn't the car crash it could easily have been. Instead, far from alienating fans, *Some Girls*' lead single scored a US No. 1. It turns out its seductive Philly-inspired four-to-the-floor coupled with Bill Wyman's walking bass works rather well. Jagger's shift from whisper to falsetto to growl is a modish bit-part, and there are still plenty of elegantly wasted guitar licks elbowing their way onto the dancefloor – and all the while, that looping organ hook plays on.

32 LOVING CUP
1972

Yet more shambling genius from *Exile On Main St.*, this was one of the few tracks on the LP that originated elsewhere (a version with a different piano intro was recorded during the *Let It Bleed* era). *Loving Cup* harnesses a soulful lilt somewhere between blues, country and gospel, only to clumsily arrive at roughshod genius, led by some career-defining piano work from sessioneer Nicky Hopkins. Respite arrives via the smooth brass harmonies of the break, before Hopkins is welcomed back into the frame to draw the song to a close.

30 BEAST OF BURDEN
1978

When Keith's drug habit almost spelled the end for the band, this tender moment on *Some Girls* was, in the downtrodden guitarist's words, "a rejuvenation". Punk boiled over all around them but, unaffected, the band went back to basics. Ronnie and Keith intertwine effortlessly here, as everything just clicks in that Stonesey kind of way. "*Beast Of Burden* is a good example of the two of us twinkling felicitously together," remembered Keith. "So we said, 'Let's get it on'." Bette Midler scored a US No. 1 with a version in 1984.



28 START ME UP
1981

Start Me Up began life as a reggae tune, but remained unfinished (and unapproved) as albums came and went, until a rockier version surfaced as lead single on the *Tattoo You* LP. Led by Richards' instantly recognisable riff in his signature open-G tuning, this was a huge return to form. The last of the band's tunes to make the UK Top 10, this has since become a regular opener for the Stones' live sets. It's made them a pretty penny, too: Microsoft dished out millions of dollars to use it for their Windows 95 advertising campaign.

31 SWEET VIRGINIA
1972

Another outlaw classic from *Exile…* (with more than a nod to Gram Parsons), this harmonica-infused acoustic romp treads the country line to awesome effect. Add some choral – perhaps almost gospel – backing, the odd brass outburst and some timely 'whoops' and we're back in the Nellcôte basement, jamming along right with them. And, of course, it's all tied together with that seminal chucklesome philosophy for the everyman: "Got to scrape that shit right off your shoes."

29 DEAD FLOWERS
1971

Country music and the Stones were never regular bed-partners, but this good-time, slide-flecked item suggests it's an area that should have been better explored. While Jagger admitted that *Dead Flowers* was "tongue-in-cheek", it still seems to strike a fine balance, particularly since it was intended as a put-down (of sorts) to a past squeeze. Gram Parsons was pally with Keith at the time, too, and his influence is felt here, while original member-turned-road-manager Ian Stewart's piano adds further charisma.

27 MOONLIGHT MILE
1971

Mick Jagger's Japanese-influenced "dream song" was the perfect closing statement to draw the curtain on *Sticky Fingers*. This rain-drenched, yearning orchestral ballad was recorded at Jagger's then-estate Stargroves in the band's mobile recording studio and is set alight via spectacular string and horn arrangements from Grammy-winner Paul Buckmaster. As Mick intones "Just another mad mad day on the road" and longs for home, this six-minute epic opens up and everything seems just about perfect.

26 IT'S ALL OVER NOW
1964

This upbeat creation was penned by Bobby Womack and sister-in-law Shirley and recorded with his group The Valentinos, who scored a minor hit with it in 1964. When brought to the Stones' attention by influential Big Apple DJ 'Murray The K' mere weeks later, it was commandeered (despite Bobby's protests), recorded at Chess Studios in Chicago and taken to the pinnacle as the Stones' first UK No. 1. Once he'd seen the royalty cheque, Bobby's attitude quickly changed…

24 CAN'T YOU HEAR ME KNOCKING
1971

Richards' *Sticky Fingers* sparring session with Mick Taylor is something to behold. The bandleader's mastery of the rock riff is upfront and centre in this gritty masterclass in blues-rock guitar, spread across seven minutes – nearly five of which are a pure, sprawling impromptu jam. Elsewhere, Bobby Keys' sax honks with glee, Rocky Dijon mirrors the strums with some vibed-up congo and, of course, Jagger steps in with a supporting melody that's happy to play second fiddle to the throng.

25 SWAY
1971

It's the death of the party and cold resignation reigns strong, as Jagger mourns, "It's just that demon life has got me in its sway". Mick offers up a rare rhythm guitar performance and Charlie wheels around the kit, accentuating the sullen, grandiose drama, before Mick Taylor's epic, rudderless solo, lost amidst strings, glides out over the fade. Guest appearances come from The Who's Pete Townshend, as well as Small Faces' Billy Nicholls and Ronnie Lane, who all sing backing vocals.

Silk Cut

Perhaps one of the strangest, rarest – and most decadent – of Stones vinyl offerings is the mythical padded pink-silk 3D promo of *Their Satanic Majesties Request*. First of all, until relatively recently, there were only loose rumours of two copies known to exist and nothing more… That is, until photographs of what looks very much like this luxuriant fabled edition were sent to Jan Richards in 2010. The photos show the padded exterior frame with its 3D picture sleeve in the centre, and an entirely silk-covered back cover. They reveal the record itself to be a test pressing with a standard late-60s pink Decca label, with the album title rubber-stamped on. Does this release even exist? Is the photo real? Or is the whole thing merely an elaborate hoax, initiated to wind up collectors? We may never know, but if you've seen one – or own one – then please let us know! The version pictured here is a stereo promo with lenticular cover.

UNRELEASED

23 THE LAST TIME

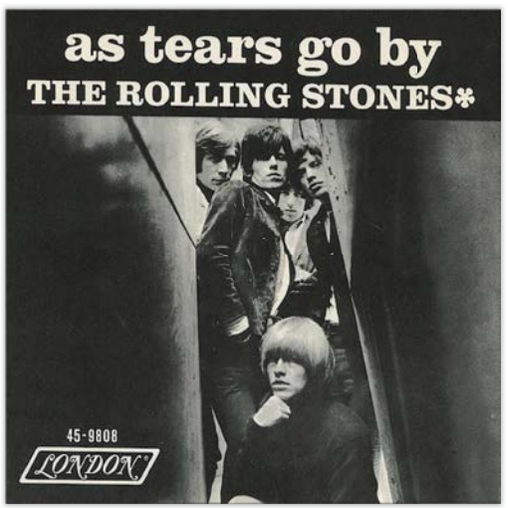
1965

One of the Stones' finest pop riffs – from the fingers of Brian Jones – introduces this cycling single from the mid-60s, a very early though remarkably self-assured creation from the Jagger/Richards songbook that used The Staple Singers' 1958 gospel tune *This May Be The Last Time* as a kick-off point. Phil Spector played a part in the production, adding his distinctive Wall Of Sound feel to this, the Stones' third UK No. 1 and second US Top 10 hit.

21 LET'S SPEND THE NIGHT TOGETHER

1967

On piano, Jack Nitzsche provides the delicious opening salvo to this carnal invitation, a track deemed too risqué for the airwaves. What's more, Jagger was ordered to amend the lyric for *The Ed Sullivan Show* and his reluctance is palpable every time he sings "Let's spend some time together", with a roll of the eyes. The police forced their way into the studio mid-recording, and were asked to add percussion using truncheons, a distraction while the band stowed their contraband.



22 AS TEARS GO BY

1965

This pastoral, almost chamber-esque US 7" was the product of Stones manager Andrew Loog Oldham literally forcing an inexperienced Jagger and Richards to sit down together in their kitchen to write an original. Even then, Oldham gave the track to another of his acts, Marianne Faithfull, who had a Top 10 hit with it the year before the Stones' own release, whch was a bare-bones version added to their fifth LP *December's Children (And Everybody's)*.

20 19TH NERVOUS BREAKDOWN

1966

As deliciously raw and ragged as Stones tracks come, lyrically astute, and with an unrelenting forward motion that cements the allure, this early pop song is high-speed subversive cool. When the hook finally chimed in, triggered by a fuzzed-up wail from Keith's guitar, the song's No. 2 spot on both sides of the Atlantic was emphatically secured. And no worthy critique can avoid mention of that incredible outro, with the bass guitar throttled expertly for good measure.

19 UNDER MY THUMB
1966

Jagger's highly questionable misogynistic lyrics aside, this is a beautifully crafted tune from the band's *Aftermath* LP. Once again, it's Jones' fascination with unusual instrumentation that adds the otherworldly lure here – this time, it's a percussive looping marimba, while Keith's characteristically economic licks and a Motown-inspired backbeat steady the ship. Sadly, this will forever be remembered as the song the band were playing when Meredith Hunter was killed at Altamont.

18 RUBY TUESDAY
1967

The Stones' fourth US No. 1 was resigned to the flipside of *Let's Spend The Night Together*, but scored far more airplay in lieu of its provocative plattermate. This, the ultimate hippified break-up song, was supposedly written by Richards about his free-spirited girlfriend, Linda Keith. Jack Nitzsche's simple piano and Jones' distinctive recorder infuse it with medieval-tinged psychedelia, while a bowed double bass – supposedly played by both Richards and Jones simultaneously – adds a mournful slant.

17 HAPPY
1972

It's Keith who leads the charge here, with a barking vocal anchoring the whirlwind of instrumentation circling around him. Borne out of an off-the-cuff jam between Keith and saxophonist Bobby Keys – and with producer Jimmy Miller sitting behind the kit – this euphoric groove was secured without the help of any of the other Stones. With Jagger's harmonies and a jubilant horn section overdubbed later, this is feel-good to the max.

16 ROCKS OFF
1972

Surrounded by transient hangers-on and in various states of disarray, the spontaneous *Exile…* sessions at Nellcôte conspired to create an irresistible ambience. *Rocks Off* kicks off that record with a dog-eared splendour infusing brass, open-tuned guitars and lyrical nonchalance to resounding effect. A vampiric Jagger is at his lyrical peak as he offers his dilettante motto, "The sunshine bores the daylights out of me".

15 TIME IS ON MY SIDE
1964

'Soul Queen Of New Orleans' Irma Thomas was first to add her silky tones to this Jerry Ragovoy creation and the Stones dressed it up in their loose-fitting vestments later the same year. As comfortable with deep soul as anything else, this aloof take spearheaded the delicate balladry of the Stones' Stateside offensive. It provided the band with their first US Top 10, thanks in part to their US TV debut on *The Ed Sullivan Show*.

14 IT'S ONLY ROCK AND ROLL (BUT I LIKE IT)

1974

New recruit Ronnie Wood had a hand in the writing of this jubilant celebration of the trade, during sessions at his Richmond pad, although his guitars were later removed wholesale by Richards (bar one lonely 12-string). Despite label protests, the band insisted the song be a single and, with David Bowie on backing vocals and the Small Faces' Kenney Jones on drums, the record made No. 10 in the UK and No. 16 in the US.

13 PLAY WITH FIRE

1965

Distinctly English compared to the bulk of their material, thanks to the London references, Jagger's unusually British accent and the aristocratic quarry at the heart of the lyrics, this cloaks a sinister, disquieting underbelly. Cut at RCA's LA studios, it features cameos from Phil Spector (on bass) and Jack Nitzsche, who volunteered the revolving harpsichord hook. Foreboding, minimal and very short, *Play With Fire* found its home as the sturdy flip-side to single *The Last Time*. This is the US version.

The five rarest...

5 HAVE YOU SEEN YOUR MOTHER LIVE!

UK Decca LK 4838 (mono) 1966

£3,000 to £4,000

An air of mystery surrounds this Stones rarity. While made in the UK, it wasn't available here throughout the 60s, with most copies issued in Germany and Scandinavia. Not all the tracks were recorded live and none were laid down at the Albert Hall, as the back cover reports. They were reportedly recorded in Newcastle and Bristol, plus studio recordings with audience sounds added.

4 BIG HITS (HIGH TIDE AND GREEN GRASS)

US London NP-1 (mono) 1966

$2,000 to $6,000+

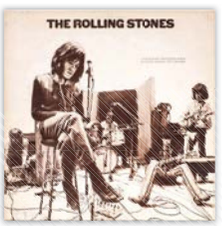
When it comes to the world of vinyl, the devil is most certainly in the detail, whether it be typos, label colours or – as is the case with this ultra-rare LP – slight variations in the typography. Whereas, on the main release, the title of this LP was upper case across five lines, this withdrawn mono version featured the title in lower case italics, across only two. Only scant copies are known to exist.

3 STONED / I WANNA BE YOUR MAN

US London 45-9641, 1964

$9,000+

This, the first edition of the Stones' US debut 7" single (with purple and white label) is nigh-on impossible to get hold of, having been withdrawn promptly before it even reached US record stores, thanks to that characteristically risque title. With the band yet to find their feet, *Stoned* is a simple, rough-cut blues instrumental with spoken-word vocals from Jagger. A few copies survived; one recently sold on popsike.com for $9,000.



2 THE ROLLING STONES PROMOTIONAL ALBUM

US/UK, London RSD-1/Decca RSM-1,1969

circa £9,000

Only a small number of this US tour promo LP were pressed, split between the UK and the US. The cover featured a shot taken during the *Let It Bleed* sessions. The US version lists all of the group's albums to date, plus the tracklisting on the rear, while the UK version omits the album list altogether. A few signed copies exist, and one sold in 2015 for around £9,000.

1 STREET FIGHTING MAN / NO EXPECTATIONS

US, London 45-909, 1968

£13,000+

For this infamous US single's cover, the band chose to goad the powers-that-be with provocative images depicting the civil unrest that surrounded them. It was issued after a summer of protest, sparked by the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. and London Records deleted it almost immediately, destroying all of the remaining copies. Of the 10-20 copies which made it through, one sold in 2011 for over £13,000.

RAREST RECORDS

12 GET OFF MY CLOUD

1965

A wild attitudinal rant against the restrictions of modern life, albeit directed at a follow-up-hungry label, this mid-60s rocker cares little for convention. Jagger clearly wasn't alone in feeling interfered with, and this ode to being left well alone followed …*Satisfaction* to the pinnacle of the Billboard chart. As Jagger rails against neighbours and parking fines, his comrades cook up a filthy brew. Downplayed by Richards as a "knee-jerk reaction", this is three minutes of pure disheveled magic.

10 HONKY TONK WOMEN

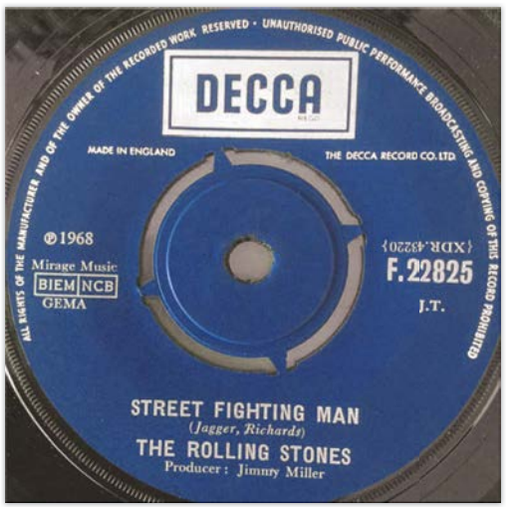
1969

With suggestive lyrics written supposedly about a prostitute, *Honky Tonk Women* started life as a "hokey" cowboy song until it metamorphosed into something else entirely. This sweeping country blues plays cleverly on the recalcitrant strain marbled deep through the Stones' 60s output, while maintaining the melodic heights expected of the band during this golden era. Brian Jones was fired directly after the recording, and was found dead in his pool mere days before its release.

11 WILD HORSES

1971

Cut at Muscle Shoals in 1969, this plaintive gem was shelved due to legal issues, before becoming a standout of the *Sticky Fingers* LP in 1971. Although uncredited, Gram Parsons helped write the song, calling it "a logical combination between their music and our music", and was given *carte blanche* to record it first. Pair Mick's heartfelt lover's plea in the verses with Richards' chorus lyric – for his son Marlon – and it's a bewitching blend of emotions, one of the most introspective and moving in the Stones' catalogue. The version pictured here is the US release.



9 STREET FIGHTING MAN

1968

With a dog-eared acoustic recorded to cassette for added coarseness, clanging rhythm bashed out on an undersized kit, and with Jagger ushering in a rare intensity, this is the Stones at their low-slung best. They were at their most political, too: this was directly inspired by the 25,000-strong Vietnam protests in London's Grosvenor Square and, once again, addresses a tumultuous decade past. Released in the US as riots kicked off in Chicago – and far too close to the bone – the record received zero airplay as a result, and limped in at No. 48.

8 JUMPIN' JACK FLASH
1968

One of the band's strongest singles, *Jumpin' Jack Flash* reveals The Glimmer Twins at the peak of their pop sensibilities. Yet another killer riff in Richards' newfound open-D tuning that he likened to "levitation" (the first steps of which came from a pre-rehearsal jam between Wyman, Jones and Watts), a rags-to-riches lyrical transformation (and with a character named after his gardener, Jack Dyer) it has an atmosphere of wild bohemia that's irresistible. As our protagonist changes from pupa to butterfly, the psychedelia emerges and the groove opens out.

6 BROWN SUGAR
1971

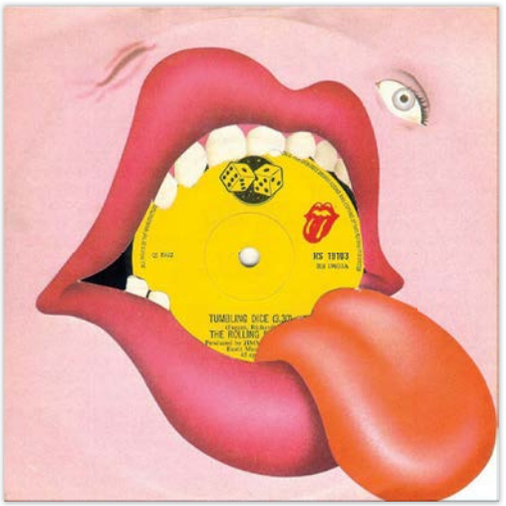
Many won't have even noticed that the lyrics tell their illicit story framed within the landscape of the slave trade (albeit suggested by some to be a metaphor for heroin addiction), meaning *Brown Sugar* once again cuts Jagger as the fearless wordsmith. Laid down in Alabama mere days before the fateful debacle at Altamont, here is a tune, which – regardless of its real meaning – rocks like the best of them. With Charlie Watts' rhythmic fifth sense in full effect and Richards' Telecaster stripped of all the baggage and free to run wild, this is pure class.

7 YOU CAN'T ALWAYS GET WHAT YOU WANT
1969

The Stones' final act of the 60s was *Let It Bleed*, an LP topped and tailed by two of their finest creations. The Jagger-penned gospel rock of *Gimme Shelter* set the bar impossibly high, while this ragtag slice of brilliance matches its plattermate as the grooves play out. The London Bach Choir open with one of the most iconic intros of all time and it's all calcified by lyrics that put a positive spin on the looming air of disenchantment that enveloped them. Add Al Kooper's piano, organ and horn, and it's one of the finest musical finales of any decade.

5 PAINT IT BLACK
1966

Quite unlike any of their other creations, this effervesces with Eastern mysticism, while still stamped with the Stones' loose-limbed blueprint. Here, they exhibit that rare ability to refine an idea to its bare bones and make it sound far too easy. Jones offers up his exotic sitar to subtly flavour the lick, while Jagger's despondent narrator shadows that hook like a gloomy apparition. "That was the time of lots of acid," he said of the song. "It's like the beginnings of miserable psychedelia." Yes, it's a darker corner of their catalogue, but listen again and its murky fabric will charm as it did on first listen.

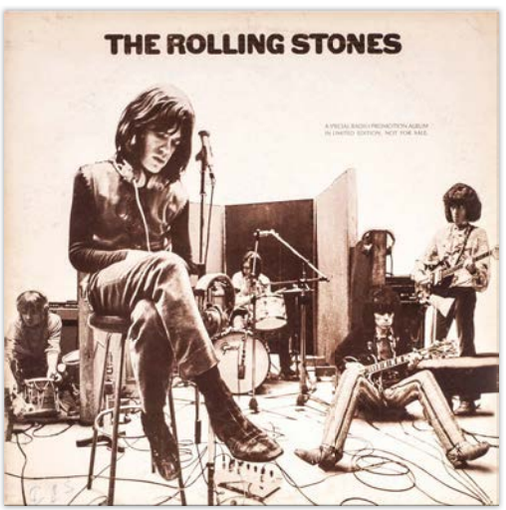


4 TUMBLING DICE
1972

A contentious selection for the Top Five perhaps, but *Tumbling Dice* holds within its swagger the very essence of the revelry contained within the grooves of the *Exile On Main St.* LP, one of the group's most natural, spontaneous and utterly addictive collections. Mick matched Keith's riff with lyrics inspired by a conversation with Nellcôte's housekeeper and the basement soon reverberated with acoustic guitars, a rough-hewn bluesy groove and rapturous gospel voices, which upped the elation during the creation of this tousled masterpiece. Impulsive, brittle and simmering with feel, this is the Stones right in the pocket.

2 GIMME SHELTER
1969

Deep-seated paranoia and hopeless resignation resonate within this tune like wretched ghosts of the 60s, destined to haunt its bars forever. From the epic winding intro, to the climatic denouement, it could only have come from the close of a decade that witnessed the height of Vietnam, global insurrection and the assassinations of JFK and Martin Luther King Jr. Here was a tune that played the zeitgeist back to the people. Add the slow separation from founder member Brian Jones, and his tragic death, and it was all concocted into this filmic, fearful, yet glorious panorama.



3 SYMPATHY FOR THE DEVIL
1968

Dramatic, daring imagery, a noir narrative and a healthy splash of humour instil this with everything needed for rock glory – and a bad-boy reputation. It was the obvious opening statement for the band's *Beggars Banquet* LP, with considered ingredients that include ramshackle percussion, a driving backing melody, that habitual ragged soundscape and Jagger at his diabolical best – trucking lyrics inspired by Mikhail Bulgakov's novel *The Master And Margarita*. Plain-dealing chords, one of Richards' best-loved solos and, with producer Jimmy Miller pulling the strings, this track harnesses the ultimate vibe. It also features on ultra-rarity *The Rolling Stones Promotional LP.*

1 (I CAN'T GET NO) SATISFACTION
1965

As Mick Jagger once said, this was the song "that made The Rolling Stones" and, for us, it has to take the top spot. With its groove circling around the consummate rock 'n' roll lyric and the ultimate riff, this is one of the finest singles of all time. Its creation was charmingly off-hand, with Keith's infamous fretted phrase fashioned in a late-night haze, nonchalantly strummed into a portable tape recorder. "I had no idea I'd written it," he admitted. This unsated yet youthfully defiant rite of passage became their first US No. 1 – the Glimmer Twins had come of age. ●

HOME NO PLACE LIKE

A concept album about Brexit and the home counties may seem a tough sell, but that's exactly what Saint Etienne have made – and it's one of the outstanding albums of 2017 so far. **Chris Parkin** meets guitarist Bob Stanley…

On their 1991 breakup song *Girl VII*, Saint Etienne's Sarah Cracknell reeled off a long list of places that included London's Primrose Hill, Canonbury and Plumstead Common, among other more exotic locations. But there was no room for Horsham or Tunbridge Wells or Chelmsford. Those humdrum home-counties towns and cities just didn't tally with the vibrant, groovy pick 'n' mix of acid-house-infused electronica and indie-pop that dominated the band's wonderful debut album *Foxbase Alpha*. But since the EU referendum, the theoretical line dividing London from what Bob Stanley calls "not London" has become more significant. And it's both the 'B' word (ending in 'exit') and the counties orbiting London that inform Saint Etienne's ninth album, released in June.

"We were in Amersham when the referendum campaign was on," recalls Stanley, who recently moved out of the capital to start a family. "Someone had this massive billboard in their garden: 'Get Out Of The EU!'. It was, like, are you actually mad? This is really not like London. So there was this idea of feeling uncomfortable in the place we grew up in, but we didn't spell it out to each other. We just used the home counties as a theme, without saying, 'Right, we've got to write about Brexit.'"

DIAMONDS IN THE ROUGH

Despite growing up in the home counties – Stanley and Pete Wiggs in Surrey (Reigate); Sarah Cracknell in Berkshire (Old Windsor) – this is the first time Saint Etienne's psycho-geographical pop has focused so explicitly on those places. But the trio aren't giving these Leave-voting counties a shoeing. They're almost reclaiming them. Says Stanley about his own memories of Reigate: "Growing up in a place where there's nothing to do apart from walk up the North Downs or go to the pub, there's a freedom to think for yourself. It's no coincidence The Bromley Contingent and Stanley Spencer came from the home counties. Self-invention is easy if you grow up in suburbia – David Bowie."

These personal songs, then, which skip along to a soundtrack of suburban disco, electronica and lo-fi chamber pop, see the band returning to find diamonds in the rough in Woodhatch, Whyteleafe ("The Stockholm of the 90s," sings Cracknell) and that most maligned of all English counties. "It's a living cliché for most people," says Stanley of Essex, the topic of *Home Counties*' spectral-pop standout, *Sweet Arcadia*. "But there's a thing there at the moment called Radical Essex. They put on talks about the strange architecture there, the weird communities that are almost like social experiments. The Crass house [Dial House] is there. Sarah was born in Essex and had friends who lived on a weird commune out near Bradwell nuclear power station. It's a fascinating place."

There's a hauntological thread to *Home Counties*, too, inspired by the group's fascination with "what happened before". One example Stanley cites is the old Basildon of self-managed plot lands that were wiped out and replaced with concrete ▶

homes. "Like in *Halloween*, when they build on the Indian graveyard – it's an Essex version of that," he laughs. *Train Drivers In Eyeliner*, inspired in part by Earl Brutus's glam-hooligan-turned-train-driver Nick Sanderson, who died in 2008, tackles another unexpected subject: the listening tastes of railway workers pootling around the home counties.

"Nick was a member of ASLEF," says Stanley. "He talked about setting up a splinter union, just to cause trouble. He was going to call it ASLEF 2. But I've still got friends who spend a lot of time with ASLEF. So I was like, 'Oh, what kind of music are they into?'. 'So-and-so is into heavy rock; so-and-so is into post-rock'. They certainly sound more nuanced than the RMT."

TOP OF THE POPS

These lyrical concerns, brought to life by the sweetly observational voice of Cracknell, are only to be expected from a band who've always taken a keen interest in now-unfashionable moments in pop culture. And not just on Saint Etienne's albums, either. Stanley and Wiggs' *English Weather* compilation for Ace Records recently focused on obscure UK rock released between psychedelia and prog, while Stanley's first book about pop history, *Yeah Yeah Yeah*, devotes – as the *Guardian* pointed out – "more pages to Lieutenant Pigeon than Led Zeppelin".

His follow-up, *Too Darn Hot: The Story*

"I'M OBSESSED WITH POP MUSIC. THERE'S ALWAYS STUFF TO DISCOVER"

Of Popular Music, will explore "ragtime to rock 'n' roll". Whether it's for a clutch of new Saint Etienne songs or an individual project, digging around in a forgotten past for inspiration is second nature for a non-league football enthusiast and record collector like Stanley.

"I'm just obsessed with pop music," he says. "There's always stuff to discover and see how it falls into place and how it fell into place at the time. I suppose the social history aspect fascinates me more than most people; things like the rewriting of history so that Iggy Pop is on a par with John Lennon. I find that annoying. Incorrect. Even talking about things like Basildon again: the idea that Depeche Mode could come from there. Or that The Cure could come from Crawley. I find that fascinating. Geography and place and popular culture and sounds and music and art – they all connect."

Stanley can always be found in the quieter sections of record shops, away from whatever genre's currently in fashion, or picking up charity-shop gems that have been languishing in a shoebox for ages. But even Stanley has noticed there's more competition these days.

"In the early 90s, Ace put out some compilations of British girl singers, and it felt like the only people who collected that stuff were me and the people who worked for Ace – and we all knew each other. We'd swap tapes. Now there are people collecting that stuff all over the world." He's seen the same thing happen with glam. But there's one area where Stanley is left to his own devices still.

"This is very trainspotter-y, but hits from the 50s on 7"," he says, a little furtively. "The very first 7" singles. I'm kind of fascinated by them because of what they are. The historical significance. Of course, a lot of the time, the music isn't especially good, but I've probably got a higher tolerance for Perry Como than most people."

UNDER THE INFLUENCE

This brings us neatly back around to Saint Etienne's music. Throughout their career, there's always been a magpie-like, cut-and-paste quality to their sound – a peculiarly distinctive mish-mash of new and old discoveries. It's no different on *Home Counties*, with its sun-dappled exotica and girl-group pop sidling up next to bucolic disco and Dexys soul. If you ever find Stanley, Wiggs or Cracknell wielding an obscure 7" single, it will almost certainly influence a future Saint Etienne track.

"I remember Noel Gallagher did an interview," laughs Stanley. "He goes, 'Yeah, this kid gave me a tape of The Left Banke; never heard of 'em, but guess what? It's brilliant!'. The interviewer asked, 'I know them, will they influence the album?'. 'Of course not! Can you imagine Bonehead playing the harpsichord?'. But it's odd not to let what you're listening to or reading inspire what you're working on."

Noel should perhaps think again. Because by sponging up musical influences, headline-news stories and obscure modern folk tales, Saint Etienne have turned what could've been a potentially quite unappealing concept album about Brexit, rail-replacement buses in Crawley, non-league football grounds and the forgotten phenomenon of the Enfield Poltergeist into an absolute triumph. ●

SONGS IN A MINE

PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING

R'S KEY

It might not be the most obvious story choice for a London-based act, but for Public Service Broadcasting, life in the Welsh Valleys around the time of the miners' strikes is as relevant as ever. **Laura K Williams** digs a little deeper...

Released this month, Public Service Broadcasting's third studio album, *Every Valley*, focuses on the history of the Welsh coal-mining industry up until the dark days of the mid-1980s. "It's a story about industrial decline," says the band's songwriter and multi-instrumentalist, J. Willgoose, Esq. "It's centred around coal mining in the UK, and in South Wales in particular, but it's a story which has been repeated the world over and which has particularly striking resonances, given the current political climate. I wanted to do something a bit more tightly focused than *The Race For Space*, geographically, and something with a bit more of a human element."

Asked what drove them to Wales in particular, he says: "I'm not sure I really know. I was aware of the British Film Institute's mining archive, and that's always a part of it, whether or not there's material that we can have access to. When we did our first UK tour, we didn't do a Cardiff date, and people in Cardiff went mad at us. I thought, 'They're already angry, what can we do to make it up to them?'"

While making an album for most bands involves initially playing around with music and lyrics, the starting point for Public Service Broadcasting is often sifting through reams and reams of video and audio footage in archives and beyond. And with *Every Valley*, it also included conducting original interviews with the ex-miners and their families who lived through the experience, to draw out fresh commentary.

While some archives do feature vinyl, most of the research carried out for this album was on cassette and VHS, with some digitised to CD. "A lot of the quarterly mining-review films which the Coal Board produced hadn't been transferred before," says Willgoose. "So we had to go in and watch them on the old Steenbeck machines; I'd lace them up myself and some were upside down and a bit dodgy.

"I was listening to a lot of the audio interviews that Dr Hywel Francis recorded just after the strike and just going through hours of audio, listening out for these little snippets. It was a lot of research, mostly on cassette tape. I bought myself

a little dictaphone transcriber, so I could speed it up to 1.3. Listening to heavy Welsh accents at 1.3 was quite a challenge at times. I think we'd had it easy with the research for the last two albums, because so much of it had been digitised and transcribed already – but with this, that wasn't the case, so it was a lot more difficult."

The band knew they wanted to record somewhere in the Valleys, and this led them to Leeders Vale Studios, based in the former lecture hall of a Steel Workers' Institute in Ebbw Vale, with its own mini video library. Willgoose admits: "There was talk of doing it at one of the residential studios in Wales, because there's a lot of them and it's a pretty part of the world, and bands camp there and make a pretty record; but it didn't seem the right thing to do for this record, to go and be fussed over in a luxury recording studio. It felt like the kind of album where you should put a shift in yourselves, really. We ended up totally transforming the room at the Institute. Wrigglesworth built this massive drum canopy there – like that 'building the barn' scene in *Witness*." It was all recorded to tape, before being mastered/cut at half-speed, to preserve the stereo image a lot better. "Tim Young, who mastered it at Metropolis, is quite excited about that," says Willgoose.

The group spent months 'undercover' in the Valleys. "We wanted to get ourselves embedded there," says Willgoose. "We even had a cover band name, 'The Antennas', but nobody cared. The people in the Institute knew us and the people who saw me walking my dog every morning, but that's about it. I've since been corrected that it should've been 'The Antennae.'"

And while the afternoons watching rugby in the pub and long walks in the Welsh countryside never really transpired, the time spent in the Valleys played a key part in the record's creation. Welsh artists feature heavily on this record, with Lisa Jên Brown from 9Bach lending her vocals to *You + Me*, Haiku Salut featuring on *They Gave Me A Lamp* and the Beaufort Male Choir teased subtly throughout, before coming into their own for the final track, *Take Me Home*. So did the archive research inform the songs, or was a concept matched to appropriate clips? Willgoose says it was a bit of both. "There was lots of research, then more constructing the idea of the flow of the album and slotting things in – as well as going looking for different things. *Progress* [featuring Tracyanne Campbell from Camera Obscura] was written before the samples. I was going through the stuff looking for things about man and machine, and was lucky enough to find some good stuff there… You know what you're after and you don't always find it. That's one of the good things about using interviewed voices on this album, you can kind of shape it yourself a bit more. I really didn't want it to be: 'Let me tell you all about coal mining', as I was a total ignoramus."

The making of this record was not neatly confined to the time spent in Wales, but was

"IT'S ALL ABOUT LETTING IDEAS SIT, THEN COMING BACK TO THEM TO SEE IF THEY STAND UP"

PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING ALBUMS

Inform-Educate-Entertain – Test Card Recordings (2013)
The debut album for the then-duo, both of whom had previously made music in other guises. The album relied on extensive searches through the BFI archives to find audio covering a range of topics, including a Mount Everest climb, a Spitfire plane documentary and government-sponsored road-safety ads. It was hailed by music critics and reached No. 21 in the album charts.

The Race For Space – Test Card Recordings (2015)
Another record that relied heavily on snippets from BFI archives, PSB's second features speeches from JFK and rocket launches, and was accompanied by gigs at Leicester's National Space Centre. The vinyl edition was one of 2015's top 40 highest-selling LPs in the UK and included in Rough Trade's Top 25 Albums Of The Year. It just failed to make the Top 10 in the album charts, reaching No.11.

Every Valley – PIAS Recordings (2017)
Inspired by the miners' strikes and life in the Welsh Valleys, this record branches out from the BFI staple to include fresh interviews with former miners. It features many collaborations, with vocals from several high-profile Welsh bands as well as a male voice choir, and represents a much more multi-faceted approach for PSB. It is released on vinyl and other formats on 7 July.

a concept born before the last album was made. "It wasn't always a condensed period of working," says Willgoose. "The idea came before *The Race For Space* was released. It's all about letting ideas sit and coming back to them, interrogating them a bit and seeing if they stand up to scrutiny."

It was well underway by the time PSB supported the Manic Street Preachers at their Liberty Stadium, Swansea gig in May 2016. It was there they cornered Manics singer James Dean Bradfield and asked him if he'd feature on *Turn No More*. "He said 'yes,'" recalls the 'honorary Welshman' – his words of thanks were expressed at that gig – who counts *The Holy Bible* among his top three favourite records. "I thought he was just being nice, but he kept saying 'yes.'"

ON THE RECORD

Speaking to us in the run up to June's snap General Election, Willgoose flags up something unique about this album regarding the mining strikes. "The politics is not explicitly referred to," he says. "Except in *All Out*, which is talking about workers' rights, which I feel very strongly about. It's about the death of the trade unions as a strong movement to where we are now, with zero-hours contracts and the 'Big Economy' – it's exactly what the government wanted to happen. And it's what happens when you have a lack of representation and a lack of pushback against power. It felt important to get it on the record, but I didn't want to make it Thatcher versus Scargill and all that. Besides, I think that the importance of individuals is often overstated in history – 'this happened because of this person', etc. It's a great deal more complicated than that in real life, and we wanted to steer away from that with this album."

Describing this as their most difficult and best record to date, Willgoose says: "There's so many different aspects of it to pull together: sorting out the archive, the collaborators, writing the music, trying to make it work, etc. Hopefully, we've pulled it off. I think it's good, I don't know how good. We need to wait and see how people react to it. For me, it's a very moving album – but it would be, because I spent so much time working on it."

He admits that such sustained periods of listening are hard on his ears, which means that while in recording mode, he tends to shy away from listening to music at home.

He says: "I usually listen to quite a lot of records at home, but not so much recently. I've been so absorbed in this and the last thing I want to do after mixing a load of music is to go home and listen to more. Your ears get so tired if you're working seven days a week listening to stuff forensically, you need to rest them. I'm all about sitting in silence. Interesting man."

Among his favourite albums, picked up during fairly regular visits to Rough Trade East and Honest Jon's in London and the record stores visited on tour, including Rise Bristol and Piccadilly Records in Manchester, are DJ Shadow's *Endtroducing.....* and David Bowie's *Low*.

He says: "My collection includes a lot of bands that are my staples. Starting with Oasis early in the day, the Manics, Radiohead, then onto The National, Mogwai, My Morning Jacket… Then there are oddities. I've got quite a lot of Calypso, old funk, soul. All sorts, really. I tried organising it by genre and it's not really been a success. I've got a few hundred, so there's space to expand."

The self-confessed "audio purist" uses some Rega kit he was given by his friend Terry Bateman, head electronics engineer there and maker of one of his first rehearsal amps. "I don't like distortion where it's not wanted, and some of the cracks and pops on vinyl do my nut in a little bit. The thing I like about vinyl is, it's tangible, you can hold it, you can examine the artwork and get a much greater sense of the character of an album. I like the fact it's fragile, and you've got to take care of it. It degrades. It's too easy to make music feel disposable, it's throwaway – that's the reason vinyl's enjoyed a bit of a resurgence. I hate the way Radiohead released their last albums, because you get zero context – who made it, where it was made, it's just kind of dropped on you. It's like, 'Well great, thanks!'"

For *Every Valley*'s album art, Willgoose scoured through books on Welsh mining and Valleys art, until he came across the piece by a local artist in a book on public-owned oil paintings. "It felt right to have a fairly abstract and more blank piece of artwork for it. It draws my eye in instantly, and it captures something about the area that I can't put my finger on. As soon as I saw it, I thought, 'That's it. That's the one.'"

"I HATE THE WAY RADIOHEAD RELEASED THEIR LAST ALBUMS – YOU GET ZERO CONTEXT"

Willgoose also penned another Author's Note for this record, along with the relevant credits (which are long, thanks to the number of samples and collaborations) and photos, which have seen the CD booklet rise to 16 pages.

"This stuff lends itself much better to vinyl," Willgoose says. "I did an Author's Note for *The Race For Space* and, despite how pretentious that is, it seemed to go down well, so I've done another one. It's all the kind of stuff I'd pore over if I was listening to an album. It's put together with a lot of thought and attention, so I hope you can get something out of it." ●

Earth Recordings

Earth Recordings' reissue catalogue runs the stylistic gamut from Tasmanian acid-folk and Soviet film music to a long-lost album of 60s US folk-blues. But the label is synonymous with the music of one artist in particular: British folk's dazzling stranger, Bert Jansch. **Chris Parkin** visits planet Earth…

Run by Fire Records boss James Nicholls, designer Alex Hornsby and label manager Kyle Lonsdale, the North London imprint set out its stall in 2014 by reissuing Jackson C Frank's vital 1965 debut. But the label's bullhorn moment came with last year's release of *Avocet* – Bert Jansch's bucolic 1978 album inspired by birdsong. Their potentially bankrupting decision to include six interchangeable lithograph front covers paid off.

The success of *Avocet* – from conception to acclaim – is due in part to Earth's relationship with Jansch's family and estate. The label is working closely with them to rejuvenate his seemingly bottomless back catalogue, which was left relatively untouched after his death in 2011. They've now released eight collections of Jansch's music, plus an album he recorded with his wife Loren Auerbach and an EP of songs reworked by Alasdair Roberts and Edwyn Collins. The label has also taken the same approach with the estate of Tbilisi-born composer Mikael Tariverdiev.

"James has a talent for seeing the end point, first; approaching those catalogues, he already knew what the releases would look like," explains Lonsdale. "With the Tariverdiev estate, we had the benefit of the knowledge of our collaborator Stephen Coates, who was familiar with Mikael's music. But it's really about working in tandem with the estates as much as we can. Nothing makes me happier than tracking down the people who've been involved with the music from day one, and getting them involved. We're all part of the story."

Earth's own narrative now includes reissues of albums by Tasmanian psych-folk artists Steve Warner and Howard Eynon. They're also about to add the sole album from 70s US baroque-folk duo Compton & Batteau, *In California*, to their catalogue. But the label's singular approach – "We've never been in the business of issuing carbon copies of original albums; there'll always be unique elements," says Lonsdale – has been a real boon for the cult heroes of British folk.

THE POTENTIALLY BANKRUPTING DECISION TO INCLUDE SIX INTERCHANGEABLE LITHOGRAPH FRONT COVERS WITH LAST YEAR'S RELEASE OF BERT JANSCH'S *AVOCET* PAID OFF FOR EARTH

Earth have worked with Fairport Convention's founding singer Judy Dyble on two releases, and *Shirley Inspired* saw modern-day artists covering the work of song-collecting folk icon Shirley Collins. Now it's the turn of reclusive and brilliant singer-songwriter Anne Briggs and her spellbinding 1971 album *The Time Has Come*. There's an ineffable, spine-tingling quality to Briggs' spartan songs that makes her music just as important as Bert Jansch's.

"Early on, we came up with the idea of 'library' editions; everyone should have these wonderful albums in their collection and they should be accessible to everyone who wants them," says Lonsdale. "So, alongside the deluxe reissues – like *Avocet* – there are affordable versions, which are always available."

Lonsdale laughs off the thorny issue of crabby long-term fans getting upset with labels fiddling with their favourite albums and artists.

"There'll always be people who've followed an artist from the beginning who will feel disgruntled by people cottoning onto what they've known from the start. But how ridiculous is that, really? As a fan, surely you want the best for the musician? And the more people that know and enjoy their music, the better." ●

LONG LIVE VINYL CHOICE

Radiohead

OKNOTOK 1997 2017

XL

In the Library Of Congress's National Recording Registry, *OK Computer* sits between Roy Orbison's *Oh, Pretty Woman* and 1922's surreal *The OKeh Laughing Record*, offering belly laughs over a funereal cornet parp. Significant? Not really. But some Radiohead fans would probably make it so.

OK Computer is, after all, an album weighed down by its own gravitas. Tim Footman's 2007 book, *Welcome To The Machine: OK Computer And The Death Of The Classic Album*, shouts: Take This LP VERY Seriously. Some claim a comparison to Miles Davis's *Bitches Brew*. There's a crazy theory *OK Computer* and *In Rainbows* are companion/mirror LPs by design. Some even claim Thom Yorke prophesises the age of 'The Donald' (in *Electioneering*) and even foresaw exploding Samsung Galaxys on aeroplanes (*The Tourist*'s "Sometimes I get overcharged/ That's when you see sparks")... But that's how people react to strong art. They obsess.

OKNOTOK lets you dive deeper into this era-defining classic. There's little more to be said about those incredible original 12 songs. From the oscillating *Paranoid Android* to the pretty and unnerving *No Surprises* to the glacial glide of *Subterranean Homesick Alien*, *Let Down* and *Lucky*, it's impeccably crafted, and the remastered vinyl lets its sophisticated sonics positively soar. Make no mistake: *OK Computer* is a musically majestic record that shifted the musical landscape.

As for double the dose? The eight B-sides, most fans will have: six alone were on the *Airbag / How Am I Driving?* EP. So it's the three 'new' ones that are both carrot and stick. The good news? One is great. The bad news? Two are just okay. Tellingly, they all sound a bit pre-*OKC*, and don't quite fit. The marching band snares and strums of *I Promise* are redolent of Roy Orbison (see?) singing *Little Drummer Boy*. *Man Of War* is a grandiose, proggy treatise on more tech paranoia ("Unplug the phones / Stop all the taps") that would have suited *OK Computer*. Then there's the much-anticipated *Lift*, played live from 1996 before being eventually dismissed altogether. *Lift* is a grand angst-anthem, nonetheless, and would have elevated *The Bends* in particular.

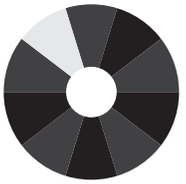
The triple 180-gram vinyl version is great value at £30. The boxed edition, adding a book, art works, notes and a C-90 cassette of demos, is a rather steep £100. As we've said, fans will find value and meaning in the framing.

Yet for all the extras, you'll still likely listen to the original *OK Computer* just as it is. Radiohead got it right first time, with everything in its right place. And that's what's really significant.

Michael Leonard

VERDICT

9/10



Various Artists

REAL WORLD REISSUE SERIES

REAL WORLD

While the Real World label have been busy remastering and re-pressing Peter Gabriel's soundtrack collection, they've also turned their attention to their own back catalogue. It's an interesting paradigm shift because, when all eight of the albums here were originally released, one of their key selling points was they were on CD – the label was presenting music from around the world, that you might never have heard before, on the cleanest, most sonically satisfying format possible. So these vinyl reissues are an opportunity to hear music that's by definition organic and human on the most hands-on and analogue of formats. A match made in heaven?

On listening back to Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan's two albums in this set – 1989's *Shahen-Shah* and 1990's *Mustt Mustt* – the answer is a resounding 'Yes'. The former's more traditional structures and the latter's fusion approach make for wild journeys across two sides. With half a dozen other albums in the series, there's a lot to explore. Our favourites? The Congolese rumba rock of Papa Wemba, the haunting vocal textures of Geoffrey Oryema and Martyn Bennett's complete rethink of Scottish traditional music with *GRIT*. Gabriel's cutting engineer has also given a 45rpm half-speed remaster to the label's influential early compilation, *Passion-Sources*. *Ian Peel*

VERDICT

8/10

Can

THE SINGLES

SPOON/MUTE

What Brian Eno said about The Velvet Underground's influence – that barely anyone bought their records, but all those who did formed bands – is just as true of German psychedelic groove machine Can. Wherever music is rooted in trippy, cyclical rhythms, the influence of their raw, metronomic funk can be found. Their blend of jazz, extended composition and insurgent psychedelia proved so successful that nowadays, mint copies of their Big Five albums (*Monster Movie*, *Soundtracks*, *Tago Mago*, *Ege Bamyasi* and *Future Days*) cost the same as a small car. But this introductory triple-vinyl assembly of the band's singles tells its own fascinating story.

The essentials (*Spoon*, *Vitamin C*, *I'm So Green*, *Mushroom* and *Moonshake*) are all present and correct – as is a distressing three-minute single edit of 18-minute man-machine stomper *Halleluwah*. But the inclusion of the 1971 pair of hushed Japanese psych-jazz B-side *Shikako Maru Ten* and bonkers novelty single *Turtles Have Short Legs*, make up for it. Their sole Top 40 hit *I Want More*, proto-punk-funk follow-up *...And More* and Hawaiian-infused *Cascade Waltz* show they were weaving magic well into the late 70s. Just lift the needle before reputation-nuking closers *Can Can* and *Hoolah Hoolah*. *Chris Parkin*

VERDICT

7/10

LONG LIVE VINYL CHOICE

Peter Gabriel

MUSIC FOR FILMS SERIES

REAL WORLD

There's something very different about these three vinyl reissues of Peter Gabriel's movie soundtracks. Because the fact is you might actually play them, as well as revel in their expanded artwork, and because Peter Gabriel is one of the last artists standing up against Spotify. In fact, you won't find any of his music on any streaming service at all. So unwrap these and enjoy the alternate, instrumental side of a performer who's known so well for his songs and singing.

1985's *Birdy*, the soundtrack to Alan Parker's film of the same name is out-there and experimental, yet melodic and absorbing. You could even think of it as a proto-remix album, with Gabriel reworking tracks such as *Wallflower*, *San Jacinto* and *The Rhythm Of The Heat* into marauding workouts of synth and massed ranks of percussion.

The only downside of 1989's *Passion*, the soundtrack to Martin Scorsese's *The Last Temptation Of Christ*, is that it could do with a trim. There are so many musical ideas here across its 21 tracks that the most moving pieces are drowned out by so many other experiments. But persevere, because *A Different Drum* and *Bread And Wine* are two of the best tracks you'll find on any Gabriel album, soundtrack or otherwise. Rounding out the set is 2002's *Long Walk Home*, with less immediate but still absorbing music from the Australian film *Rabbit-Proof Fence*. *Ian Peel*

VERDICT

9/10

Harry Nilsson

NILSSON SCHMILSSON

WARNER MUSIC

Warner have been pressing new vinyl editions of various 60s and 70s albums this year: no marketing, no fanfare… just working through the back catalogue, making sure some essential markers in the history of pop are back on the vinyl racks. This month, you'll find The Byrds' *Sweetheart Of The Rodeo* and Harry Nilsson's *Nilsson Schmilsson* appearing once again on vinyl.

Of this album's two singles, *Jump Into The Fire* is the one that's very much of its time, while Side Two's opener, *Without You*, is timeless. The Grammy Award-winning cut was co-written with Apple Records' Badfinger, recorded in London, and was the first taste of what Nilsson would sound like with some English musical input. This was something he'd always yearned for since coming out as The Beatles' biggest fan, covering both *You Can't Do That* and *She's Leaving Home* on his sophomore set, *Pandemonium Shadow Show*.

This is a delightful album that – given Nilsson's reputation as a hell-raiser, the Beatles connections, the documentaries and the all-encompassing grandeur of *Without You* – has become somewhat overlooked, albeit unfairly. So drop the needle and give it another chance. *Ian Peel*

VERDICT

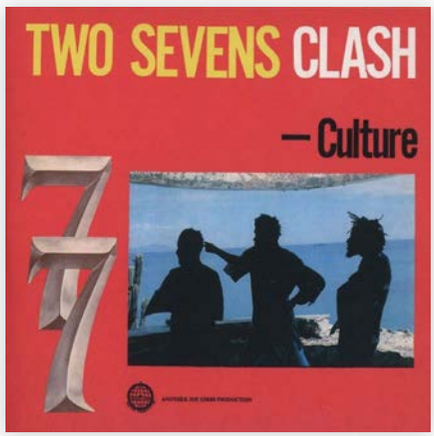
8/10

Various
SEAFARING STRANGERS: PRIVATE YACHT
NUMERO GROUP

Chicago reissue imprint Numero always goes the extra mile in its attempt to revive a past that, despite being cold-shouldered, definitely existed. Its compilation series of privately issued music from the 60s to the 80s, *Wayfaring Strangers*, is a shining example that's already focused on the lesser-known figures of cosmic Americana and pagan hard rock. Now it's the turn of the smooth rock and blue-eyed wine-bar soul synonymous with deck shoes, cocaine and Hall & Oates – yacht rock.

Ned Doheny's *Before I Thrill Again* takes the gong for lascivious lyrical clanger with "It's just my nature to penetrate you", but that's yacht rock – a bit lecherous in its wooing. Get hip to that and the fleet-fingered cosmic disco of Doheny and Michael Miglio, Peddlers-like funk of Johnny Gamboa, and trippy pop of the ominously named Breathers is worth donning your best white slacks for. *Chris Parkin*

VERDICT
7/10



Culture
TWO SEVENS CLASH
VP RECORDS

When *Two Sevens Clash* first appeared, it caused widespread panic. Not because of its sound – Joseph Hill's group peddled uplifting, harmony-drenched dub reggae – but because its title track repeated Marcus Garvey's apocalyptic prophecy that all hell would break loose when the two sevens (7 July, 1977) clashed. Nothing happened, of course, apart from this Joel Gibbs production becoming a big hit. Not just in Jamaica, but in the UK, too.

It was also a prescient release for punk bands such as The Clash, who were looking for a way out of a garage-rock cul-de-sac. Its doomy themes and revolutionary fervour resonated with Strummer and co, while the trio's dulcet harmonies and sweet melodies, and Gibbs' crisp production made it a crossover success. This 40th-birthday edition has two extra discs, with dubs from Gibbs' Mighty Two, plus versions by I-Roy, Shorty The President and Prince Weedy. A must-buy for reggae newcomers put off by the soaring cost of first pressings. *Chris Parkin*

VERDICT
8/10

Gillian Welch
THE HARROW & THE HARVEST
ACONY RECORDS

It's six years now since Nashville-based Welch and her recording pardner Dave Rawlings released this masterpiece of post-Appalachian Americana. Eight years before that, in 2003, she released her fourth album, *Soul Journey*. Performing river-clear bluegrass songs with such grace clearly requires patience. As does the process of paring down US tradition and those haunted, morbid narratives into bare-bones perfection.

Welch the label boss is just as fastidious. Mastered from the original tapes, Acony have squeezed fresh blood from *The Harrow & The Harvest* for Welch's first-ever vinyl release in its tip-on gatefold. "It's all there in the groove," she says of the reissue – a double-edged sword, of course. Underlining her brilliance, it's also a reminder that we're waiting for Welch to finally cast her spell over a collection of new songs. *Chris Parkin*

VERDICT
8/10

LONG LIVE VINYL CHOICE

The War On Drugs

A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING

ATLANTIC

Adam Granduciel has spent much of the three years that've passed since The War On Drugs' stunning *Lost In The Dream* topped many critics' end-of-the-year polls working on its follow-up. It's a record forged on both American coasts, from hundreds of hours of studio toil, and the Philadelphia frontman has spent his time wisely. *A Deeper Understanding* is another year-defining powerhouse that simmers and crackles with all the tension and luminescent beauty of a summer storm ripping through the humid desert sky.

Electronic noise and a tumbling drum fill give way to the opening piano chords and Granduciel's husky vocal on *Up All Night*; when the guitar arrives on a magic carpet of feedback and a motorik electronic drumbeat kicks in, it's as if they've never been away – The War On Drugs in all their widescreen American road-trip glory.

Three minutes in, Granduciel winds up his guitar for the sort of gloriously simple, burrowing solo that made *Red Eyes* one of the best indie-rock tunes of the last decade. The opener stretches to six minutes of arms-aloft grandeur, posting their return in emphatic fashion.

On the more reflective *Pain*, we find Granduciel observing: "I met a man with a broken back/ He had a fear in his eyes that I could understand." The guitar work is stratospheric, a grainy, fuzz-drenched solo taking over and tearing through the final two minutes of the track before dying away into post-coital ambient noise. *Holding On* is driven by a throbbing bassline and fizzing synth, its lyrics epitomising an album with transcience at its heart, that Granduciel says is about "watching yourself move between different versions of yourself and trying to either hold onto or figure out which one you're more comfortable being".

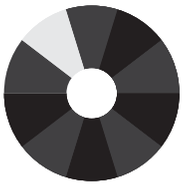
Halfway through *Strangest Thing*'s six minutes, 40 seconds, a massive snare-and-kick thunderclap ushers in a lacerating solo that fights a compelling battle with howling feedback and vibrato, before carrying us away to the outro with occasional vocal interjections cloaked in canyon-deep reverb… this is BIG music.

Light and shade arrives in the form of *Knocked Down*, with a gentle organ intro and Granduciel wistfully emoting, "Sometimes I can make it rain, diamonds in the night sky/ I'm like a child". *Nothing To Find* reinstates the pace with a propulsive drumbeat and a sky-punching riff that duels devilishly with a wailing harmonica and sparkling organ motif. It's utterly joyous stuff, all six minutes of it.

There's more than guitar heroics and massive production, though, with Granduciel underlining his brilliance as a songwriter and his Dylan-esque lyrical ability. *Thinking Of A Place*, the first single from the album, stretches from lilting slide guitar via a false ending to a sprawling 11-minute epic, our man dreaming of "falling from the sky, coming down like running water". He digs deep one last time for the pleading *You Don't Have To Go*, and it's hard to think of another band producing such compelling guitar-centric rock 'n' roll music in 2017. The War On Drugs have already made one of the albums of the year. *Gary Walker*

VERDICT

9/10



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Chris Robinson Brotherhood

BAREFOOT IN THE HEAD

SILVER ARROW RECORDS

Last issue, we brought you former Black Crowe Rich Robinson's new band The Magpie Salute's debut album. Now here's the third LP in just two years from his brother Chris's outfit, with the superb guitar of Neal Casal. More groove-based than the riffy Crowes, this finds CRB in reflective mood. The swaggering opener *Behold The Seer* is a bit of a red herring, but perhaps the best thing here, with its fluid guitars, funky keyboards and 70s flavour.

Casal's soloing is tasteful throughout and Adam MacDougall's piano shines on *She Shares My Blanket* and *Blue Star Woman*. Robinson's knack for a classic-rock ballad hasn't deserted him – *If You Had A Heart To Break* ticks all the right boxes. The psych-folk *Glow,* featuring sarodist Alam Khan, is another standout. Your move, Rich…

Steve Harnell

VERDICT

7/10

The Fall

NEW FACTS EMERGE

CHERRY RED

Critics bemoan the mess found on recent Fall albums and it's true, they can sound like the mind-vomit of an extreme hoarder too preoccupied with ghosts to organise the clutter into anything resembling good order. But this tumultuous, topsy-turvy world is exactly why Mark E Smith's The Fall remain one of the UK's most peculiar propositions.

32 albums (and 41 years) in, Smith still excels in laugh-out-loud song titles and eerie dread – and the music hits more than it misses this time out. Smith's shamanic cackle is almost too grotesque to bear on the plodding *Fol De Rol*, and the bass doesn't growl sufficiently on this double 10-inch release. But the band's motorik noise is well oiled, especially on *Couples Vs Jobless Mid 30s,* and the disarmingly tuneful surf-clank of *Second House Now* and voodoo boogie of *Groundsboy,* which recalls late-80s 'pop' Fall. It's still a weird and frightening world, then.

Chris Parkin

VERDICT

7/10

Tess Of The Circle

AMPLIFY

VINTAGE VOICE RECORDS

Released on 180-gram vinyl and limited to 300 copies, each with a lyric sheet and hand-signed letter from singer Tess Jones, the Anniversary edition of this album from the UK rockers is an enjoyably varied listen with American grunge leanings. Produced by Gavin Monaghan (Editors, The Twang), it kicks off with the pulsing tremolo guitar of *Love Is The Drug That You Crave* – more of an 80s soft-rock title you could not wish for – and quickly falls into an earnest, rocking groove. Jones' weathered, emotive vocal style is to the fore on the defiant anthem *I'm Not Ashamed*, and *Believe (Into Her Arms)* is a reflective ballad blessed with some impressive guitar work. *Digging At My Bones* is a grungey three-minute blast that's in contrast to the folky mid-tempo acoustic *Face The Changes* and strings-accompanied *The Waves Break Us Down* – a pair which hint at loftier songwriting ambitions.

Gary Walker

VERDICT

6/10

Toro Y Moi

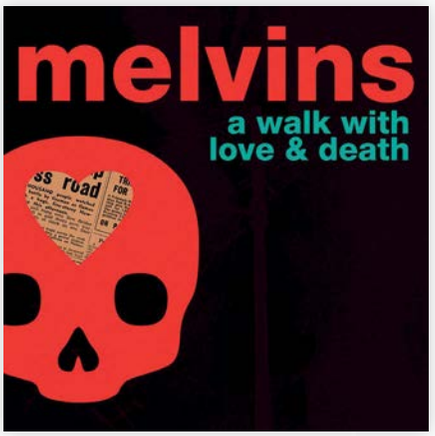
BOO BOO

CAR PARK RECORDS

During the hypnotic *Labyrinth*, Chaz Bear (formerly Bundick) pre-empts a hazy, delay-drenched synth refrain with: "This apocalypse is neverending/ Start a second life and keep moving". It's an apt summary of the trajectory of this South Carolina shapeshifter: this is the fifth Toro Y Moi record, and the story so far has seen him rise to prominence in the first wave of 'chillwave', before splicing his sound with indie-soul, ambient-dance doodling, instrumental hip-hop, early-hours RnB and indie-rock. He says his new record – now filtered through the dreamiest of soundscapes – is united by the treatment of 'space' in the music of everyone from Travis Scott to Daft Punk to Oneohtrix Point Never. But his influences never dominate: they're merely touchstones for the record's expertly layered production. First single *Girl Like You* is the album in microcosm: it's pieced together from familiar 80s-referencing elements, but is still somehow genre-defying. *Boo Boo* is released on limited marbled blue and white, or regular vinyl. *Owen Bailey*

VERDICT

7/10



Melvins

A WALK WITH LOVE & DEATH

IPECAC RECORDS

Legendary post-rock noisemongers the Melvins show no signs of slowing down 30 years on from their debut. Relentless in their pursuit of creativity, King Buzzo and co released two albums in 2016, and follow it with this expansive double-platter.

The band's first double album, *Death...* is a proper Melvins release and a palatable listen, while *Love* is the score to the Jesse Nieminen-directed, self-produced short and a confusing compilation of noise for the completist. Nine solid slabs of unrelenting sonic sludge, this is a familiar head-on collision of Black Flag abrasiveness and classic Black Sabbath doom. *Death* will delight both Melvins devotees and the post-grunge millennial who is looking to discover the band idolised by Kurt Cobain.

But Melvins are much more than a footnote in another band's story... This Washington State trio continue to push boundaries, but it's not always a comfortable listen. *Dan Biggane*

VERDICT

6/10

This Is The Kit

MOONSHINE FREEZE

ROUGH TRADE

For many years, Kate Stables' rich, smooth vocals, pitch-perfect strings and unmistakable 'woos' have been sailing into the ears of folk fans, but her band's fourth studio album has a much wider appeal – which coincides with their signing to Rough Trade. A Parisian cool combines with a down-to-earth Bristol groove, thanks in part to production by PJ Harvey producer John Parish. The depth of this record is achieved with impeccable vocal arrangements from Kate, Rozi Plain and co. Straddling the divide between traditional folk and the jazzier end of Americana, you can hear the influences of The National's Aaron Dessner, who features on this album after producing the group's last record. Storytelling lies at the heart of *Moonshine Freeze*, with tales of ill health, gypsy wives and summer days. Amid the sophistication, there's a childlike playfulness; the album title itself comes from a children's clapping game. *Laura Williams*

VERDICT

8/10

Lindsey Buckingham And Christine McVie

LINDSEY BUCKINGHAM/CHRISTINE MCVIE

WARNER

As Stevie Nicks is still dragging her stacked heels about getting back into the studio with her former band, this is as close as you're likely to get to a full-on return of the Mac. Christine McVie's surprise reintegration into the ranks of the legendary pop-rockers back in 2014 didn't just result in some critically acclaimed live shows: within months, she was inside a studio with Lindsey Buckingham, trying out new ideas in a bid to reacquaint herself with the ways of working within a group dynamic.

What started out as a limbering-up exercise has now resulted in something more significant, though, and Mac fans will be intrigued to discover that Mick Fleetwood and John McVie also figure on a handful of tracks.

As is typical with the labyrinthine back story of Fleetwood Mac, this album is not all it would seem at first glance. It's not a duet LP or a complete record of co-writes. Buckingham and McVie share the songwriting spoils on just three songs – the remainder have been written alone, with instrumental contributions from the other party. Studio polymath Buckingham does most of the heavy lifting, playing the majority of the instruments here. It sounds exactly as you'd predict when taking into account the personnel involved – slick, melodic, polished and ever-so-slightly too pleased with itself in places.

It starts brightly, as Buckingham's oddly affected rasp on opener *Sleeping Around The Corner* gives way to a trademark precision-tooled Mac chorus and the McVie-sung and defiantly retro 80s pop of the marimba-laden *Feel About You*, which wears its joyfulness unashamedly on its sleeve. *In My World* is Buckingham at his most mainstream – a lovely touch are the backing vocal callbacks to *Tango In The Night*'s *Big Love*.

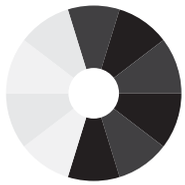
It would also take a hard heart not to find positives in the bittersweet MOR of *Red Sun*, McVie looking back on an old love affair that's hit the buffers. Buckingham's pretty fingerpicked guitar elevates the plaintive *Love Is Here To Stay* and its multi-layered vocals are another fine example of his studio mastery. If this is an album defined by its lightness of touch, a rare moment of muscularity comes with the blues rocker *Too Far Gone*, where a grandstanding Mick Fleetwood takes all the plaudits, as he drives a decent, meaty guitar riff.

Then it's decidedly downhill, with a run-in of tracks which fail to catch alight – the final third is a mixture of the undercooked and forgettable. *Lay Down For Free* is a rather anonymous affair, and the saccharine piano ballad *Game Of Pretend* totally drops the ball. The veiled references to the absent Nicks during *On With The Show* may create a little frisson of interest, but the slight song soon grates. McVie's lilting closer *Carnival Begin* is an 11th-hour victory, but it only papers over the cracks. An interesting epilogue to the Mac story, but not an essential chapter.

Steve Harnell

VERDICT

6/10

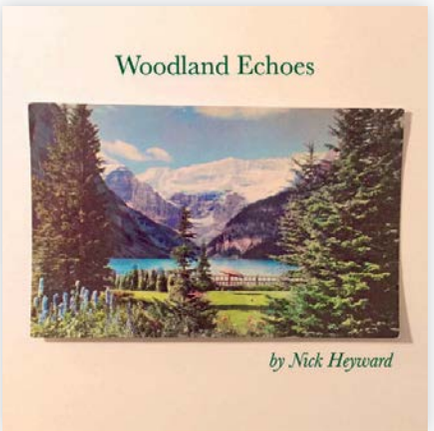


Celebration
WOUNDED HEALER
BELLA UNION

A contradiction lies at the heart of the title of this fifth album by Celebration, a Baltimore trio based around husband and wife Katrina Ford and Sean Antanaitis, now on their fifth album. It's a vividly evocative record that reflects on the tribulations of mid-life toil. As singer Ford puts it: "Mid-life, we find ourselves dealing with bathroom renovations, death, raising kids and totally fucked scheduling".

This is no record of monochrome whinges about first-world problems, though. Some 17 additional musicians, including Future Islands singer Samuel T Herring, who guests on *Paper Trails*, contribute to a wide-ranging set of shimmering, joyous compositions illuminated by Ford's soulful voice. Bittersweet ballad *Spider* has a deeply infectious bassline at its heart and the grand Bond theme-like *Velvet Gloves* is lavished with sweeping strings, while the excellent *Freedom Ring* is a Fleetwood Mac-like blast of perfect pop. *Gary Walker*

VERDICT
7/10



Nick Heyward
WOODLAND ECHOES
GLADSOME HAWK

For his first solo album in 18 years, former Haircut 100 frontman Nick Heyward has delivered an aural dose of vitamin D that's the perfect summer soundtrack. Inspired by the Florida countryside, it's an upbeat and diverse collection that skips joyously across a range of styles. *Love Is The Key By The Sea* is a beautifully chiming opener, with a light-on-its-feet melody that could have come straight out of the songbooks of McCartney or Ron Sexsmith. There's a nod to Americana on the fiddle-led *Mountaintop,* while *Who?* is an airy slice of jazz pop.

The sweet harmonies of *Baby Blue Sky* are a highlight and instantly bring to mind Teenage Fanclub – high praise, indeed. The power pop of *Perfect Sunday Sun* is equally fine.

There's shade among the light, too. *Beautiful Morning* and *For Always* are introspective ballads, and the acoustic instrumental *New Beginning* even nods at Led Zeppelin. Echoes of his very best work.
Steve Harnell

VERDICT
8/10

Goldie
THE JOURNEY MAN
COOKING VINYL

As we're reviewing the vinyl edition of Goldie's new album – his seventh, if you include releases as Rufige Kru – the experience begins before the needle even hits the record. The front cover is a collage of moments from Goldie's life and career and it's like an absorbing time-capsule: the uncomfortable school photo, the Walkman-clad (orange headphones and all) teenager, the hazy Ibiza holiday snap...

There's also a very proud 1995-era Goldie holding his gold disc for *Timeless* and two of that album's sweetest, most melodic tracks, *State Of Mind* and *Angel*, point the way to *The Journey Man* and its opening gambit, *Horizons*.

From that moment on, the artist takes what you might think a Goldie album would sound like and extrapolates it into the future. For example, on the *State Of Mind*-esque *Tomorrow's Not Today* (jazzily piano-led, shimmering vocals). Or the reboot of *Angel*, *The Mirrored River* (harsher beats, almost-gospel vocals). Does this album work, and is Goldie relevant in 2017? On this evidence, most definitely. *Ian Peel*

VERDICT
7/10

ROUNDUP Genre Hopping Grime

Each issue, **Chris Parkin** uncovers the latest gems in a particular genre. This month, he rounds up what's available to vinyl collectors in the realm of grime and its offshoots…

GRIME'S SECOND 'GOLDEN AGE' TOOK A DECADE TO DAWN. ONE BIG DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ITS FIRST COMING AND TODAY IS THE DEARTH OF MODERN-DAY VINYL

Grime's second 'golden age' – in terms of unit-shifting artists, at least – took a decade to dawn. One major difference between its first coming, circa 2004 – when MCs and producers ran the road with some thrilling singles and albums – and today, is the dearth of modern-day grime on vinyl. Browse Discogs and you'll find first-wave releases such as Wiley's *Treddin' On Thin Ice* and Skepta's *Duppy* going for big bucks.

In 2017, though, a lot of grime is strictly web-only. Section Boyz' *Lock Arff* and Nadia Rose's *Skwod* are just two vital tracks not on wax. But what can you pick up?

12 months after the release of Skepta's Mercury-winning *Konnichiwa* – the first grime album to take that gong since Dizzee's *Boy In Da Corner* in 2003 – it's now available on red double vinyl. Clamour for its wax release came from an older generation in thrall to an aggro sound described as 'this generation's answer to punk and agit-rap'. But a yoot looking for tangible physical product from its heroes – and Skepta's often-overlooked involvement in grime's evolution, both solo and as part of Boy Better Know, qualifies him in the 'hero' category – also helped trigger the release.

Also (finally) available is Stormzy's *Gang Signs & Prayer*. *Konnichiwa* came first, powered by the blitzkrieg bounce of *Shutdown*, but Stormzy's debut – grime's first-ever No. 1 – is a more nuanced effort that deserves its status as a crossover hit. However, it's taken four months for the double-vinyl version to hit the racks, courtesy of Stormzy's own #MERKY label.

"I've never seen a major label know what to do with black artists," Stormzy once said. They're missing a trick, because this release will fly.

Traversing the gap between grime, UK hip-hop, dancehall and RnB is J Hus's *Common Sense*. The third grime big-hitter in 12 months, its double-vinyl release might be the most sought after. Thanks to an intrepid pop sound that also takes in Ghanaian hiplife and a mix of sweet and aggro hooks, as J Hus switches between moody patois and East-End flow, *Common Sense* will go down as a 2017 classic.

For those wishing to discover the Terror Danjah and Rapids of modern grime – the producers who give it its kick – there are instrumental releases to catch up on. 20-year-old Novelist made his name with the *1 Sec* EP in 2015 (still easily found on Discogs), but he's on an instrumental tip at the moment and his limited-edition *Yakuta* EP on blue 12-inch is a foreboding and propulsive must-get. Easier to nab is Maniac's *Homecoming* EP. Following his scorching *100 Problems* hook-up with Boothroyd and Maxsta in 2015, Maniac's latest effort is a wavy, bleepy, strings-sampling four-tracker of high-intensity grime.

More adventurous still are Mr Mitch and Slackk. The former's *Devout* album for Planet Mu is a deft, pretty take on emotional, down-home grime, featuring guest MCs and inspired by neo-classical electronica as much as it is by the endz. Similarly, Slackk's *A Little Light* (R&S) bridges the gap between ambience and dystopian grime in another deep trip. Whatever the sound, though, grime's game of one-upmanship is making it more exciting than ever. We just want more vinyl to prove it. ●

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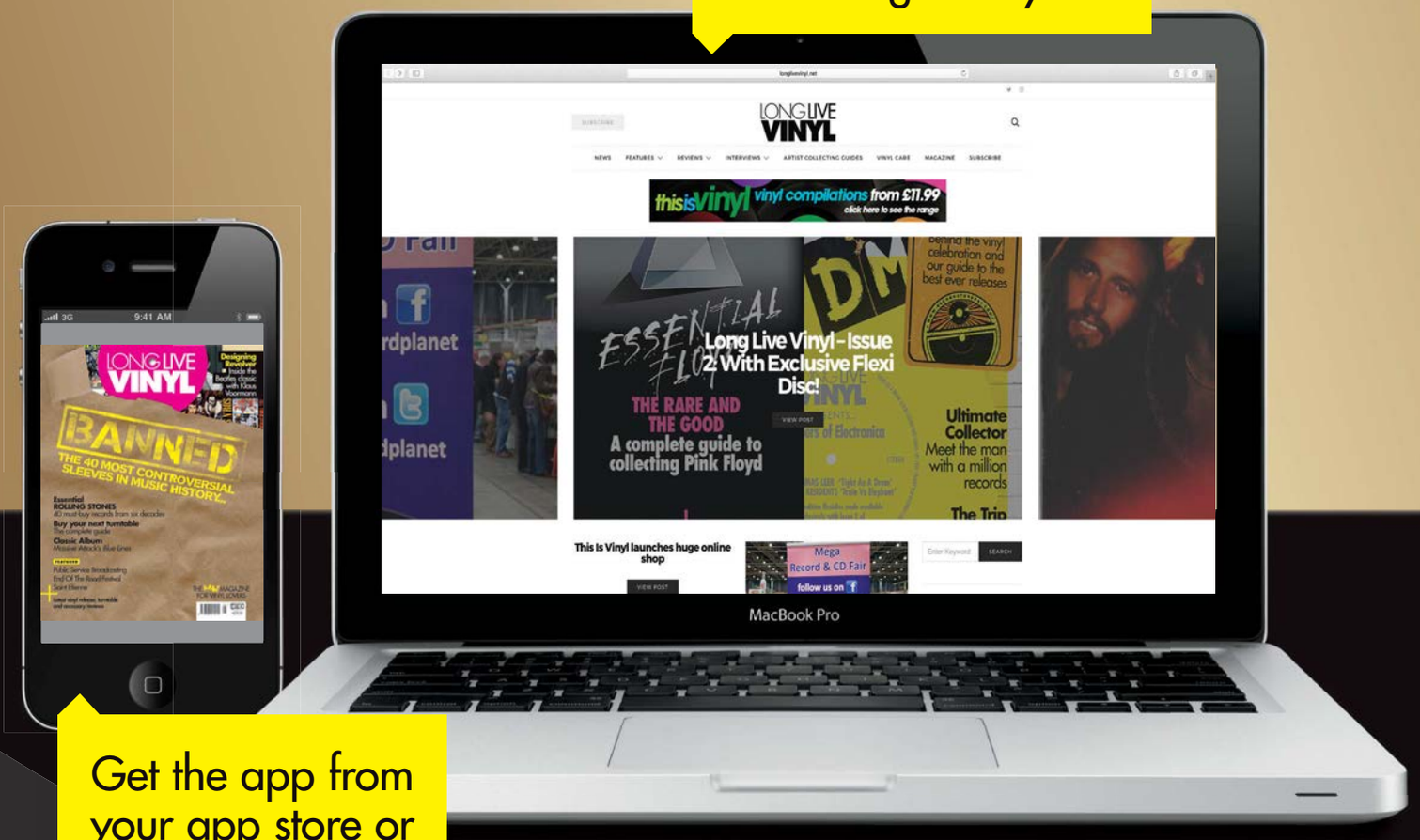

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DUAL MTR-75

AUTOMATIC TURNTABLE WITH BUILT-IN PHONO STAGE

£199 *www.bigredsales.co.uk 01344 893932*

Do you yearn for the good old days, when turntables were fully automatic? **Paul Rigby** says it might be time to invest your money in the MTR-75, a budget buy that's automatic for the people

A two-speed, Chinese-made design, complete with dust cover, the MTR-75 from German manufacturer Dual is notable because it provides fully automatic operation. Hence, pressing the Start button on the front of the plinth will lift the arm off its cradle, swing it to the beginning of the record and lower it onto the grooves. As you might expect, pressing the adjacent Stop button reverses the process.

To ensure the arm doesn't miss the record, there's a switch on top of the plinth for 7" and 12" selection – although curiously these figures are printed in centimetres! Hence, the unlikely figures of 17cm (7") and 30cm (12"). Hardly romantic…

A metal platter holds a rubberised mat, while a phono amplifier is included at the rear, along with a USB port. A packaged CD contains the music software *Audacity*, for digital recording and editing.

An SME-type bayonet headshell holds the basic Audio-Technica AT3600 moving-magnet cartridge with conical stylus. This cartridge can run at a downforce of 2.5g, although Dual would prefer that you run it at a vinyl-ploughing 3-3.5g. Don't… that's my advice. Stick with 2.5g instead.

The MTR-75 feels a little light, weighing in at just 4kg, with a lower-quality feel than more expensive decks. That includes the phono amplifier and all of that automatic drive gear – compare that to the manual, stripped-down Rega RP1, which weighs in at a solid 5.5kg.

For sound testing, I played a Vinyl 180 reissue of Gary Numan's *Me! I Disconnect From You* from Tubeway Army's *Replicas* LP. On the negative side, the overall sound quality offered very little discipline in terms of both the upper and lower frequencies. Treble and midrange both tended to smear over the soundstage. The lack of precision in this area allowed Numan's vocals to wander all over the place, invading the space of much of the synth-based instrument backing. The bass had similar issues.

Listened to in isolation, though, without a reference turntable, the Dual actually sounds fun. The bass has an organic feel to it, and it's the same thing with the vocals – Numan sounded like he was having a whale of a time, genuinely enjoying himself.

Onto vocal jazz and Earl Coleman's *Love Songs* featuring Billy Taylor's band, and this 1968 Atlantic pressing suffered less from bass bloom, because, well, there was less bass. Hence, less detail was masked, more subtlety was audible and a great amount of emotion was present in the vocal performance. That said, the same midrange smearing occurred. The lack of focus also meant that the piano was rather bland and lacking in guile, and the brass section was veiled.

I've been taking pot shots at the MTR-75 throughout this review, so you'd assume I hate it. Yet that isn't the case. In fact, I admire Dual for trying to pack so much into this turntable for such a low price. Think about it: you've got a fully automatic turntable here, with a built-in phono amplifier and USB, arm and cartridge, plus dust cover, for under £200. On the face of it, this is a real bargain. Okay, the sound quality might not measure up against the Regas and Pro-Jects of this world, but that only matters if you're a hi-fi journalist performing A-B testing between them all. Listening to the Dual in isolation, without a competitor to worry it, the Dual sounds marvellously engaging and musical as an analogue source. On balance, the Dual MTR-75 is an attractive budget proposition. If you buy one, upgrade the cartridge and save up for a basic external phono amplifier as soon as you can. The Dual will thank you for it. ●

VERDICT

PROS

- EASY TO USE, GOOD VALUE AND MUSICALITY
- AUTOMATIC OPERATION
- USB AND PHONO AMPLIFIER

CONS

- BUILD QUALITY
- BASS BLOOM
- MIDRANGE SMEARING
- LACK OF FOCUS

SCORE

20/33⅓

ROKSAN RADIUS 7

TURNTABLE WITH ELECTRONIC SPEED SWITCHING

£1,700 *www.roksan.co.uk 020 8900 6801*

This midrange turntable arrives complete with the company's own Nima arm… **Paul Rigby** wonders whether it's time to put on the red light with the Roksan

Essentially, the Radius *7* is a replacement for the Radius *5* from London's own Roksan. As such, you'd expect a host of improvements, and there are just such things within the *7* – principally including improved motor decoupling. The designers have also managed to source an acrylic for the chassis that has a glass effect.

Turntable setup on midrange units can be a bit of a pain, but the Radius *7* is pretty straightforward in this respect. As you put this one together, you'll notice the motor assembly, which uses an electronic speed selection. This has been sourced from the high-end rpm speed control from the company's expensive Xerxes turntable, while a connected LED light shines blue for 33rpm or red for 45rpm, which is more effective as a light show because of that high-density, glass-like plinth.

There are irritations with the Radius *7*, though. There's no option to replace the mains cable or the phono cables for something more audiophile in the future, which could improve sonics. Also, the power button and the speed button are uncomfortably close to the belt. It's easy to see yourself accidentally catching and unhooking the belt during operation. Plus, the Roksan arm has no protective arm clip to keep the arm tube in place, which raises the risk of an accident involving that relatively expensive cartridge (none is included).

None of these points are major problems in themselves, but the accumulation of quibbles is something you'll need to be aware of.

I began the sound tests with a smattering of Bruce Hornsby And The Range, and the track *Look Out Any Window* from the 1988 album *Scenes From The Southside*. Hornsby is known for his big piano sound, which is rich and swathed in detail. The Roksan found this potentially sonically chaotic instrument easy to highlight and presented it in an ordered and focused manner. The soundstage exhibited an admirable layering that was also able to draw the ear inwards into the musicality of the track's rolling rhythms. The 'period' 80s production was also suitably polished by the Roksan, which added clarity to the busy soundstage.

For a contrast, I turned to Ennio Morricone and the lushly orchestrated *Metti, Una Sera A Cena,* with its gentle scatting from vocalist Edda Dell'Orso. The title track was open, sparkling and lucid, possessing a light, weightless aspect to the sweeping strings over the expansive soundstage.

There was also an almost detachable metallic reverb from the glockenspiel. The impressive transient response added a rounded and immediate strike and

reaction to this sunny and cheerful instrumental interlude.

Turning to classical, and Beethoven's *Moonlight Sonata* via Arthur Rubinstein, surely one of the greatest classical pianists of the 20th century. Here, the Radius 7 had a less positive effect on the maestro's peerless reputation – on the more sustained piano notes towards the end of the first movement – with slight but 'visible' wavering, which resulted from speed stability issues.

I didn't detect these speed issues in other musical genres, I have to add – piano sustains can be vicious during speed tests.

Finally, to a satisfying slice of rock psyche from Mighty Baby. Their self-titled 1969 LP was a touch compressed – a fact that the Roksan doesn't try to hide, which ultimately bodes well for the turntable's tonal balance, transparency and basic honesty.

The vocals were impressive. On the track *House Without Windows*, the lead vocal is joined by a backing voice to form an effective harmony, and there was an impressive degree of personality to both. Bass, meanwhile, is punchy, never blooming or 'mass-y' in a false way, while secondary percussion from the tambourine offered a detailed and treble-infused ringing feedback.

The overall sound quality of the Roksan Radius 7 is excellent, which makes the niggling design issues all the more frustrating. If you can look past these comparatively minor points (despite there being a lot of them, in relative terms), then you have yourself an impressive performer, which will infuse your music with clarity and detail. ●

VERDICT

PROS	CONS
MIDRANGE INSIGHT	CONTROL-BUTTON PLACEMENT
OPEN PRESENTATION	NO ARM-TUBE CLIP
FOCUS	SPEED VARIATION
CLARITY	

SCORE
27/33⅓

REGA PLANAR 1

TURNTABLE WITH IOTA ALPHA SPEAKERS BY NEAT

£249, www.rega.co.uk, reviewed at winchesterhifi.co.uk

Ian Peel tests out a true entry-level turntable, but with some of the trappings of higher-end decks – and pairs it with some eager-to-please wooden droids for speakers...

We received some interesting feedback from a few readers recently on Rega's Planar 3, reviewed in Issue 2. At £600-plus, that's not really an entry-level turntable, you said. And quite right, too. Although what we were getting at was that the P3 was entry-level for what you might call a 'lapsed audiophile'. The sort of user who packed away their kit after the CD revolution of the 90s, but who's now ready to spend some (admittedly serious) money on vinyl and a turntable again. Re-entry level, you could say.

So, this month, we're looking at a 'true' entry-level product, Rega's Planar 1 which is, at £249, coincidentally around a third of the price of the P3. Their Carbon cartridge comes pre-installed, and it's the same needle you'll find on the Planar 2.

Rather rewardingly for a low-end product, the speed change is manual. So, instead of flicking a switch, you get to roll up your sleeves and lift off the platter and adjust the flywheel when you want to move from 33rpm to 45rpm or back again. And that platter is surprisingly light, being made from phenolic resin (or plastic, to you and me). The P1 is available in black or white. If you want red – and, indeed, a glass platter – it's a case of going for the next model up.

On the speaker front, we gave the Planar 1 a real treat in the form of a pair of Iota Alphas from Neat. Sure, this is rather like buying a Mini and adding a set of Ferrari tyres, but we've been itching to have a play with a pair of these speakers for some time, and they certainly lived up to our expectations – on two counts.

Firstly, there's their looks to consider. They're half the height of your average pair of medium-to-high-end floorstanding speakers. And secondly, their welly. With a top speaker tilted upwards and another hidden in the bottom (above some demonstratively large spikes), it rounds out the bass superbly, looking up at you like a droid that's just rolled off the *Star Wars* set, albeit with a satin wood finish.

I went slightly off-piste with the first of this month's test discs, and played a copy of Silva Screen's recent reissue of *Puppet On A Chain*, Piero Piccioni's soundtrack for the 1970 Patrick Allen

movie thriller. And it's an incredibly dark and brooding experience. The low bass this system delivers really enhances the low brass on the *Drug Dealers* cue. And the strings – think *Ipcress File* intimidation or *Persuaders*-style tension – have an open-air feel, as if the orchestra's travelling with the action on *Psychedelic Mood*.

When playing back this first LP, it's immediately apparent that the tone arm lever is not only well engineered, but also designed superbly. Rega must agree, as they use the same lever on all their models, regardless of price.

VERDICT

PROS

BUILD QUALITY

THE FUN OF A MANUAL SPEED CHANGE

QUALITY CARTRIDGE INCLUDED

CONS

TONEARM LEVER SLOWLY UNSCREWED WITH USE

DRIVE BELT RATHER THIN (THOUGH LITTLE TORQUE REQUIRED)

SCORE

30/33⅓

For something more modern, but still musically related, I tried out a copy of Caroline True Records' recent double-LP compilation, *Perfect Motion – Jon Savage's Secret History of Second-Wave Psychedelia, 1988-93*. And this is where the Neat's ribbon tweeter comes into its own, giving a very accurate reproduction of the very bass-light DNA Groove Mix of Electronic's *Get The Message* on Side Two.

SNAP, CRACKLE AND POP

Being realistic, our playback of an LP such as *Puppet On A Chain* should have sounded pretty terrible. And, in a bygone era (with a 70s pressing on a 70s turntable), it would have. But now, with a combination of the Planar 1's robust build and musicality (and a good remastering session by the record label), this is an experience that's a compelling alternative to streaming and digital, delivering an experience that's physical, as well as sonically absorbing.

To give the deck one last test, we went for a very well-worn copy of Tracy Chapman's still-spellbinding eponymous debut. The bass was there on *Fast Car*, with all due respect to the Neat Iota Aplhas. And, let's not deny it, there were some very audible pops and crackles – this is a record that celebrates its 30th anniversary next year, after all.

But herein lies the key point, of course. When the CD age dawned, manufacturers would talk of these pops and crackles to dismiss vinyl. But now, we listen to them in a different context. The turntable gives such a great playback experience that the pops and crackles come across on the Planar 1 like sugar coating on a cake. Exactly what you expect to hear from your vinyl. ●

HOW TO BUY Turntables

PART 1

Putting together a hi-fi system that does your precious record collection justice can be a confusing and expensive process. Fear not, help is at hand. In Part 1 of his guide to building the perfect setup, **Paul Rigby** turns his attention to turntables

Vinyl is back! At least that's what the mass media will tell you. Most of us know, however, that vinyl has never actually been away. Having worked for hi-fi magazines for many years, I could see the writing on the wall in terms of vinyl's increasing popularity. Even during the early noughties, we were reviewing more and more turntables and fewer and fewer CD players. Something was certainly afoot.

Now, of course, turntables are everywhere, as is vinyl – but how do you play yours? Well, you might not play it all, of course. You might not even own a turntable. And in that case, you'll no doubt be rather impatiently wanting some buying advice from us and perhaps getting a little frustrated that we're not getting on with it. Give us a sec, we'll sort you out very soon.

Some of you may have played vinyl, way back when. You may have stored your old turntable up in the attic. Now, retrieved and wrapped in a fuzzy, nostalgic glow and lots of dust, you've fired the ol' gal up again. For old times' sake.

Maybe you're too young to have plugged into the fad the first time around. CDs were likely your first love, or maybe even downloads, streaming and the like. Seeing this weird stuff called 'vinyl', you made tentative enquiries to your parents or relations. They may have passed on their old turntable to you. A bit like a Viking elder passing on his trusty sword… but with more plastic. Of course, there are the old codgers out there who used a turntable way back, were never fooled by the CD propagandists (oh, no!), played and bought their vinyl then and still do so now.

There are also those smarty-pants types who have always collected and played vinyl, upgraded their turntable over the years on regular occasions, have a brilliant system and feel pretty damn smug about it. To those people, I say, "Go away, this feature is not for you".

This guide is for those who might want to buy a new turntable for the first time, or believe an upgrade will enhance the sound quality from their precious vinyl. Before we get to the recommendations, though…

DON'T GO THERE PT. 1

CHEAP AND FEARFUL

Sometimes you can get a little carried away – especially when looking to purchase your first turntable – but also when you're looking to upgrade. There are pitfalls for the unwary. This is why it's useful to read guides such as this and to seek out as much advice as possible. Let's first tackle the budget arena, which can beckon the innocent with shiny things and objects that glitter. There are turntable designs out there that may look interesting, have an aura of quality and seem reasonably priced but should, in fact, be treated like a rabid, long-toothed and particularly impolite dog.

I'm talking here about the type of turntable you tend to see advertised in the glossy newspaper supplements, lifestyle magazines and, more disconcertingly, in the windows of trendy clothes stores. The problem with those lavish lifestyle magazines is that everything ▶

SOMETIMES YOU CAN GET A LITTLE CARRIED AWAY – ESPECIALLY WHEN LOOKING TO PURCHASE YOUR FIRST TURNTABLE – BUT ALSO WHEN YOU'RE LOOKING TO UPGRADE. THERE ARE PITFALLS FOR THE UNWARY

OrigIn Live Sovereign MK3-1

Rega Planar 3

Audio-Technica AT-LP5

Avid Volvere

featured in their pages looks sweet, appealing, nice, cuddly and trustworthy.

These record players are typically (although not exclusively) sold as an 'all in one' (with an amplifier and speakers built into the chassis). They scream value for money, but tread carefully – as the often scant build budget for these items may be devoted more to the looks and marketing, leaving audio priorities firmly in third place (or even lower). As you'd probably expect, players of this type offer inferior sound quality to audiophile options. Check also for examples of poor build quality, as it could be damaging to your vinyl.

DON'T GO THERE PT.2
DJ RECORD PLAYERS

The other category that 'consumer' buyers may wish to steer clear of is turntables aimed at DJs. Manufacturers such as Numark, Vestax and Reloop (although the latter has recently introduced a range of 'audiophile' products) are favourites of DJs.

The problem is that the turntables are created as a tool with a DJ specifically in mind, not an audiophile. They exist to be used in a relatively tough working environment, which is great for the club setting, but can have disadvantages for sound quality in audiophile terms. That is, these turntables often add features that are useless to the audiophile, such as pitch adjustments and pop-up lights, with knock/bounce-friendly yet sonically noisy plinths, and arms with shaky bearings.

DON'T GO THERE PT.3
CHEAP JAPANESE TURNTABLES

This 'avoid' I offer to you with reservations and lots of 'maybes', 'ifs' and 'buts' – because there are exceptions to this particular rule. I shouldn't even use the word 'avoid'. What I should advise is that you be cautious when buying very cheap turntables (around the £100 to £150 mark) from some of the larger respected Japanese brands. Some of these decks are reasonable in terms of build and passable in terms of sound quality but, if you can afford to buy one of these, then you can probably afford (or can wait a few weeks to save a few more pounds) to buy a turntable with better sound quality. I'm also not happy to recommend running a turntable that encourages you to run a stylus at very heavy downforce levels that touch on the range of 3.5g to 4g.

TURNTABLE BUYING RECOMMENDATIONS
So, having covered the turntables to avoid, what do we actually recommend? Here's a broad selection from three different price points. This is just a suggested list, no more than that. There are lots of others we haven't been able to include due to space reasons.

BUDGET UP TO £600
This is a busy category, but it's dominated by Pro-Ject and Rega…

PRO-JECT ELEMENTAL
PRICE £175
HENLEYDESIGNS.CO.UK

When you look around the sub-budget market – generally below the £200 figure – the quality of the turntable products can in many cases be dubious, with the meagre build budget often concentrated in the wrong places. This belt-driven example has its heart in the right place, though. Basic it might be, but, with its quality 8.6-inch arm and Ortofon OM 5E cartridge, it does the job.

AUDIO-TECHNICA AT-LP5
PRICE £329
EU.AUDIO-TECHNICA.COM

This stalwart of the Japanese production line features a built-in phono amp, which allows you to plug straight into powered speakers or an amplifier without a phono amp built into it for those on a low budget. The turntable also features a USB socket, which will be a boon for digital fans looking to 'rip' their vinyl collection for later listening on a digital music player.

REGA PLANAR 3
PRICE £550
REGA.CO.UK

There are classics and there are classics – and then there's the Rega Planar 3. It's been around for ever, incorporating gradually enhanced and evolved design tweaks, but it still retains its superb sound-quality reputation. This iteration includes a new RB330 arm and a high-gloss acrylic laminated plinth (which is now stiffer), with many other redesigned tweaks and the Elys 2 MM cartridge.

MID-RANGE £600 TO £2,000

With more budget, you'll get more features, and elements of finesse…

FUNK FIRM **FLAMENCA**

PRICE £935

THEFUNKFIRM.CO.UK

A rather sober variation (at first glance) on the outfit's often 'funky' designs and famed innovation, the dual-speed Flamenca features the company's F7 tonearm and a precision-ground glass platter, plus electronically controlled DC motor. Notice that the motor is positioned to the front-left instead of the rear. This is done to align it with the tonearm and reduce vibrations according to Funk Firm.

CLEARAUDIO **CONCEPT**

PRICE £995

SOUNDFOWNDATIONS.CO.UK

This German design looks simple in its lines, with a rather stripped-down and low-key presentation. And that's a good thing, because the priority is sound quality and value for money. This high-end brand recently released this 'low cost' (well, it's low cost for Clearaudio, put it that way) model to include the excellent Concept tonearm. You also get a moving-magnet cartridge thrown in for good measure, so there's nothing extra to buy. A plug 'n' play deck for those who want the quality without the fuss.

MICHELL **GYRODEC SE**

PRICE £1,600 (WITHOUT AN ARM OR CARTRIDGE)

MICHELL-ENGINEERING.CO.UK

Another classic that's up there with the Rega Planar 3 in terms of reputation. The GyroDec is a phenomenon, and another deck that has gradually been improved over time with subtle but noticeable enhancements. Created in the early 80s, the GyroDec has cheated time, because it sounds better than ever – there's no sense that the design is even falling behind its competitors. Beautifully engineered, the deck can be bought with the company's own TecnoArm, which you can add for an extra £660.

HIGH-END £2,000+

Turntable designs utilising higher-quality components and fittings…

VPI PRIME **SCOUT**

PRICE £2,650

VPIINDUSTRIES.COM

VPI are based in the USA and make a range of expensive turntables. This is one of their lower-priced models. The Prime Scout uses the VPI JMW-9 tonearm, plus an external motor in a substantial housing to minimise vibration. A thick and textured vinyl covers the MDF plinth; that is bonded to a 12-gauge steel plate, with an aluminium platter.

AVID **VOLVERE**

PRICE £5,000

AVIDHIFI.COM

Just the turntable on its own, complete with a separate power supply, the Volvere offers a belt drive, sprung sub-chassis design with a featured clamp. It's interesting because it evolved from the (then) top-rated Acutus turntable (£12,000). Avid simplified the Acutus until the price point was lowered sufficiently. Hence, the design is not only 'sound' in terms of balance and efficiency, but the sonic qualities have, in effect, trickled down from above. An SME IV arm (£2,750) is highly recommended with this model.

ORIGIN LIVE **SOVEREIGN MK3-1**

PRICE £10,300

ORIGINLIVE.COM

One of the world's great turntable packages, and one of the most neglected. Goodness knows why. Origin Live have a slightly different take on getting the best from the turntable, placing as much emphasis on the arm as the turntable itself. Hence the Enterprise arm (which is part of the final cost above) is almost the same price as the Sovereign itself. The Sovereign has recently had a motor and power-supply upgrade. ●

Part2

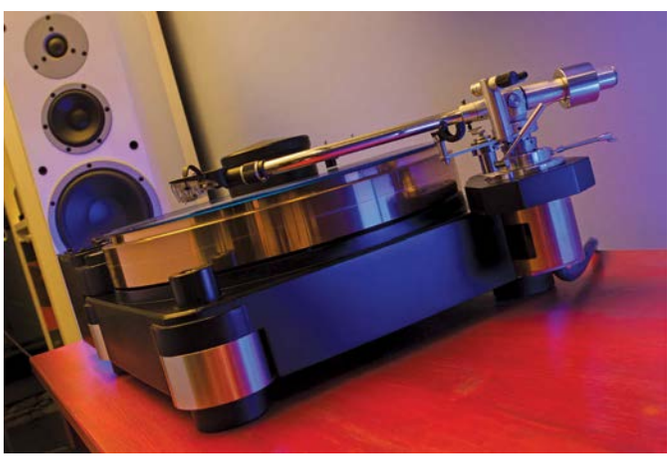
CHANGING ROOMS

Last month, we identified the various acoustic issues commonly found in domestic listening environments. Now it's time to consider what we can do to alleviate those problems. **Huw Price** seeks treatment

There was a time when hi-fi enthusiasts seeking help with acoustic treatments would've needed to track down some arcane tome on studio design at the local library. Probably written by BBC-trained engineers, said book would've been packed with impenetrable maths formulae, complex diagrams and instructions for building outlandish acoustic-treatment devices.

While the contents remain as relevant as they ever were, now it's much easier to access information online, and you don't need to be a trained acoustician to make use of it. Furthermore, the explosion in home recording has created a widespread awareness of acoustic-treatment methods, along with an industry producing off-the-shelf solutions at every price point.

Inevitably, this has filtered through to the spheres of hi-fi and home cinema, with many listeners coming to understand the potentially enormous benefits of acoustic treatment. So long as you're able to understand some basic rules, it's completely possible to tune your room to enjoy improved clarity and imaging, tighter grooves and coherent bass. So let's check out some treatment methods.



ABSORBING INFORMATION

Last month, we described how rooms with hard surfaces tend to make hi-fi systems sound bright and image poorly. One of the most popular methods for tightening and softening the sound is absorption.

It's best to think of the process as energy conversion, so in this case, we're turning acoustic energy into heat. Some of the items in your listening room may already be absorbing sound energy – for instance, a fabric sofa, curtains or fabric wall hangings. If your room sounds too bright or reverberant, you can start by putting a large rug on wood or tiled floors in front of the speakers and drawing the curtains to catch soundwaves bouncing off your windows.

Regarding curtains, if the material is porous, the sound waves can pass into the fabric, causing the fibres to rub together and generate heat. Velvet is an ideal material and if the drapes are pleated, the surface area is increased and absorption efficiency is improved.

Drapes also make more efficient absorbers when they are hung at a distance from the reflective surface, because soundwaves that make it through on the first pass can be caught when they bounce back. If there's a wall behind your listening position, consider a wall hanging such as an oriental rug or a tapestry. Some acoustic-solutions companies actually market acoustic drapes.

Rockwool provides efficient acoustic absorption and has long been used in the studio industry. It can be bought in slabs designed specifically for acoustic treatment, but it must be covered and contained to prevent fibres from shedding. It's relatively easy to make your

own acoustic panels, and you can find instructions and YouTube tutorials online. Alternatively, you can buy pre-fabricated Rockwool absorbers with a variety of attractive fabric coverings.

In recent years, foam panels have become very popular – because they're cheap, easy to handle and readily available. But we're talking about acoustic foam, rather than the stuff you might pick up on the industrial estate. Foam's efficiency for absorbing sound depends on its permeability, and ordinary foam has a closed surface that prevents sound waves from penetrating.

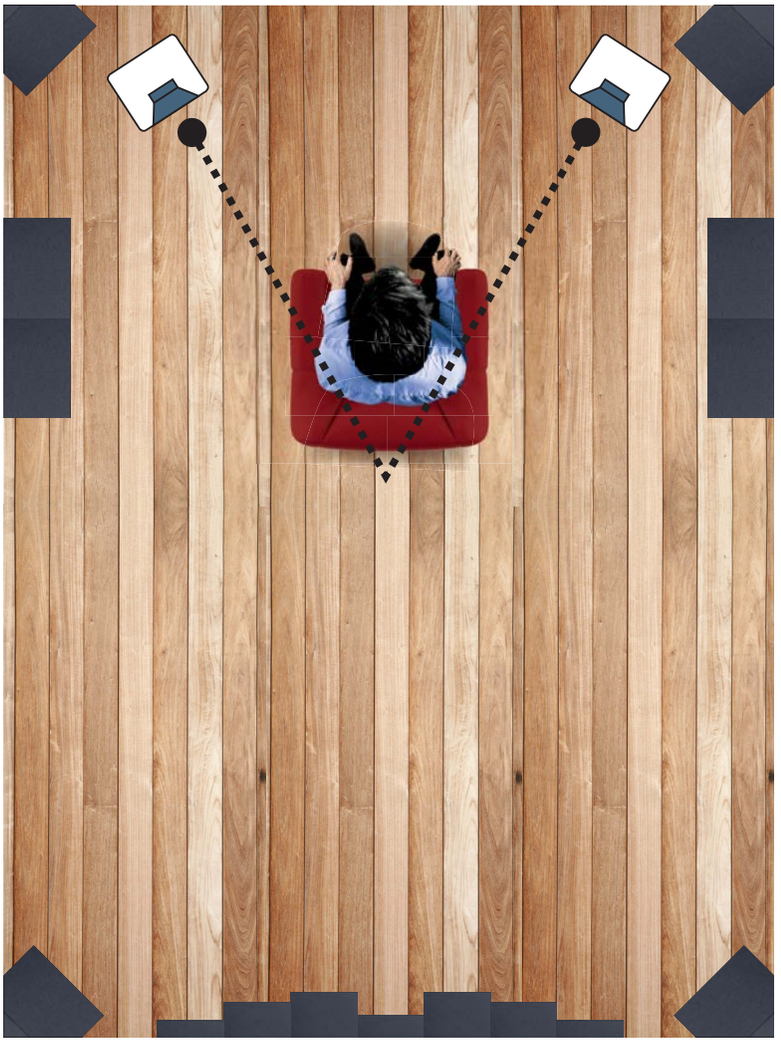
SO LONG AS YOU ARE ABLE TO UNDERSTAND SOME BASIC RULES, IT'S COMPLETELY POSSIBLE TO TUNE YOUR ROOM TO ENJOY IMPROVED CLARITY AND IMAGING

Acoustic foam is 'fire polished' or dipped in caustic chemicals to open up the pores. This allows the sound waves to enter the foam more easily where friction occurs between the fibres, dissipating the sound as heat.

SPREADING DIFFUSION

The downsides of absorption methods are that they work best at upper-midrange and treble frequencies, and that rooms with excessive absorption can sound dull, lifeless and bass-heavy. You'll also have to drive your speakers harder in order to achieve the same degree of loudness, and this can induce distortion in your amp and speakers, and damage your ears.

Slightly reverberant rooms make more enjoyable listening environments, so rather than absorb



ON REFLECTION
As well as using strategically placed rugs, curtains, fabrics, wall hangings and wall-mounted panels to treat acoustic issues in your room, you can also buy all kinds of absorbers, bass traps and diffusers – made from a variety of materials, including Rockwool, foam and fibreglass

all the sound waves to eliminate strong reflections, standing waves and flutter echoes, diffusers can be used to break up the waves and scatter them around in all possible directions. They can be used in conjunction with absorbers and actually improve their efficiency – so you'll need fewer absorption panels and they'll take up less wall space.

Diffusers are basically irregular geometric shapes, so if you have bookshelves, mix up the books so the depths all vary, rather than lining up exactly. You can also buy relatively small diffusers that can be hung from ceilings and mounted on walls. Many look sculptural and decorative, and thanks to some clever mathematics, they're highly effective.

BASS TRAPS

This is the tricky one, because so often, speakers are blamed for poor bass performance when room acoustics are the real issue. Although foam absorbers can be used to control bass, they must be quite deep and placed away from a wall to be effective. Few of us would want metre-deep foam slabs protruding from living-room walls…

Fibreglass is a more efficient absorption material, so you can achieve better performance with the same depth of material, but in small rooms it's impossible to achieve total control over bass frequencies without encroaching significantly on space.

Rather than try to control all bass frequencies where space is restricted, tuned bass traps can target frequencies that are problematic within any acoustic space. Examples include Helmholtz and diaphragmatic resonators, which can be tuned to notch out specific frequencies or narrow bands of frequencies around a given point. So if your room has a build-up at, say, 125Hz, this type of resonator can be used like a graphic equaliser.

HITTING TARGETS

You can go online and check out how commercially available absorbers, bass traps and diffusers look and decide what might look acceptable in your home. Companies such as GIK Acoustics, Auralex and Advanced Acoustics offer a wide range of products and installation guides.

Some products combine absorption and diffusion or bass trapping and diffusion duties. You may be surprised to find that many products, sold individually and as complete room kits, cost less than you might consider spending on a turntable or speaker upgrade.

Where wall space is at a premium, hanging panels from the ceiling can be a very effective measure and, if the colour of the panels matches your decor, fairly unobtrusive.

High ceilings allow you to leave space between the panel and the ceiling, so leave a gap if you can. Ideally, the first position to try would be exactly halfway between your speakers and your listening position.

If there are side walls close to your speakers, try placing panels on each wall. While sitting in your usual listening spot, have an assistant move along the wall with a mirror. When you can see the speaker in the mirror, you have identified the first reflection point – and that's the best spot for an absorption panel. Do the same on the other side and you should notice that the imaging sharpens considerably.

Bass tends to build up in corners and the junctions between walls and ceilings. Since this is usually unused space, it means that placing absorbers and bass traps in those spots is both convenient and effective. Try hanging panels across the corners, preferably leaving

***GIK Acoustics** gikacoustics.co.uk*

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some air gaps behind. Placement of bass traps is slightly less critical, so long as you can get some in somewhere. However, the corners and ceiling junction areas behind the speakers would be our preferred place to start.

If there's a wall close behind your listening spot, your hi-fi will sound bassier than it should. One remedy for this would be to consider placing drapes or bass traps against the wall.

Diffusers will work in various positions, and if there's more space behind the listening spot, they can work well on the rear wall of the room. You may also use diffusion on the wall behind the speakers or at various spots on the walls or ceiling. If possible, try placing your treatment products temporarily to hear how they affect the sound, before making any of your installations permanent.

PUT IN PLACE

Hopefully, the last three articles on speaker placement and room acoustics will have inspired you to try out some of our recommendations. If you're content with a hi-fi system that merely provides background sound, that's fair enough.

But stop to consider how much craft went into the recording and mixing of your favourite records. Leaving aside the acoustic design that went into creating the studio spaces and the incredible engineering behind the microphones, mixing desks and tape machines, what about the sound engineers, producers, mixers, mastering engineers and, most importantly, the musicians themselves?

You can be sure that the technicians trained for years and worked hours that might put junior doctors to shame, and the musicians committed time and money to acquiring the best equipment and honing their musical skills. Every detail, from the moment when a song went from the germ of an idea to the cutting of the acetate, would have been agonised over.

Put it this way – neglecting the setup of your speakers and disregarding room acoustics is tantamount to walking around an art museum wearing sunglasses, or buying the finest high-resolution TV you can afford only to use it to watch VHS videos.

By doing so, you can never fully experience the artistry encompassed within those records. However, setting up your speakers and listening room with care allows you to listen to your records in a way your musical heroes intended for them to be heard. That's the best tribute you can give, and it's no less than they deserve. ●

CRATE DIGGING WITH... Richard Jobson

Formed in Dunfermline in 1977, The Skids were one of the original punk disruptors. "Memories fade," says original singer Richard Jobson on the eve of their 40th Anniversary Tour, "but some linger for a reason. The Skids was a brilliant adventure into the world of creativity and adulthood." *Long Live Vinyl* rifles through the racks with Richard…

TELEVISION
MARQUEE MOON

"I stood outside City Records in Edinburgh one freezing winter's morning to buy the 12" version of *Marquee Moon*, an import from New York. They only had a few and I was determined to get mine, even if I had to fight for it."

BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN
DARKNESS ON THE EDGE OF TOWN

"I came late to Springsteen. This album, and especially *Racing In The Street,* sold it to me. I still remember every word of the song and in quiet moments, I put it on and sing along. I love his storytelling."

DAVID BOWIE
LOW

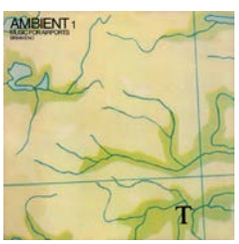
"We all have favourite Bowie periods. This is mine. He was trying to rehabilitate in Berlin: an urban frontier on the edge of annihilation. The music and words reflect that madness. It has remained part of my life and never become dull."

THE CLASH
THE CLASH

"The first Clash album created a benchmark for the rest of us. Political. Relevant. Angry. Upbeat and anthemic. I played this album until the vinyl evaporated."

NEW ORDER
CEREMONY 12"

"A Joy Division song pulled into the gentler melodic breeze of New Order, who retained the incessant bassline but gave the song a whirl of melancholy. The 12" was an emotional part of my life from the day it came out until today. I truly love this song."



BRIAN ENO
AMBIENT 1: MUSIC FOR AIRPORTS

"Eno understood the difference between hippy self-indulgence and a new neurotic calm. He gave my generation a sample of ambient beauty and they were hooked. This is a work of quiet genius."

LOU REED
BERLIN

"I had loved *Transformer*'s poppy camp, but *Berlin* was entirely different. Violent, tragic, hypnotic and profoundly moving. This is my favourite album of all time."

MAGAZINE
REAL LIFE

"This was the game-changing album of the post-punk scene in the UK. Howard Devoto's lyrics were stunning, against a backdrop of elegance and power. I had the privilege of working with John McGeoch and John Doyle in The Armoury Show."

LEONARD COHEN
SONGS FROM A ROOM

"My brother played this record every day when I was a kid. His voice, with its gloom and melancholy, became part of my musical education. They still stand up and work beautifully today."

VAN MORRISON
HARD NOSE THE HIGHWAY

"A gift from my brother that I never really understood at the time, but now its timeless songs – and Van's amazing voice – give my life a daily kick!" ●

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